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R. LALYRE

THE VOLSUNGA SAGA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ICELANDIC

BY

EIRIKR MAGNUSSON and WILLIAM MORRIS

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

H. HALLIDAY SPARLING,

WATER FAIRIES OF THE RHINE.

(After the painting by Lord Leighton)

SUPPLEMENTED WITH

LEGENDS OF THE WAGNER TRILOGY

BY

JESSIE L. WESTON,

And Old Norse Sagas Kindred to the Volsung and Niblung Tale.

THE legend is so old that memory goeth not to the contrary, which tells of nymphs of the Rhine, a superstition once commonly entertained which Heine has so exquisitely gilded in "The Lorelei." But long anterior to his poetic fancies, even the ancient Teutons and Norsemen peopled the waters of that beautiful stream with mermaids who might, upon rare occasions, be discovered sporting in the pale moonlight and discoursing music on strange instruments. It was natural that water fairies should play a part in the Nibelungenlied, the number sometimes being given as three and at others as many as nine, and their favorite lurking place was at the mouth of the Rhine, where sometimes, like their siren progenitors, they lured ships to destruction.

See page 173.

HON. RASMUS B. ANDERSON, LL.D.,
EDITOR IN CHIEF.

J. W. BUEL, Ph.D.,
MANAGING EDITOR.

PUBLISHED BY THE
NORRŒNA SOCIETY,
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INTRODUCTION

It would seem fitting for a Northern folk, deriving the greater and better part of their speech, laws and customs from a Northern root, that the North should be to them, if not a holy land, yet at least a place more to be regarded than any part of the world beside; that howsoever their knowledge widened of other men, the faith and deeds of their forefathers would never lack interest for them, but would always be kept in remembrance. One cause after another has, however, aided in turning attention to classic men and lands at the cost of our own history. Among battles, "every schoolboy" knows the story of Marathon or Salamis, while it would be hard indeed to find one who did more than recognize the name, if even that, of the great fights of Hafrsfirth or Sticklestead. The language and history of Greece and Rome, their laws and religions, have been always held part of the learning needful to an educated man, but no trouble has been taken to make him familiar with his own people or their tongue. Even that Englishman who knew Alfred, Bede, Caedmon, as well as he knew Plato, Cæsar, Cicero, or Pericles, would be hard bestead were he asked about the great peoples from whom we sprang; the warring of Harald Fairhair or Saint Olaf; the Viking[1] kingdoms in the (the British) Western Isles; the settlement of Iceland, or even of Normandy. The knowledge of all these things would now be even

[1]Viking (Ice. *Vikingr; vik,* a bay or creek, *ingr,* belonging to, or men of) freebooters.

smaller than it is among us were it not that there was one land left where the olden learning found refuge and was kept in being. In England, Germany, and the rest of Europe, what is left of the traditions of pagan times has been altered in a thousand ways by foreign influence, even as the peoples and their speech have been by the influx of foreign blood; but Iceland held to the old tongue that was once the universal speech of northern folk, and held also the great stores of tale and poem that are slowly becoming once more the common heritage of their descendants. The truth, care, and literary beauty of its records; the varied and strong life shown alike in tale and history and the preservation of the old speech, character, and tradition—a people placed apart as the Icelanders have been—combine to make valuable what Iceland holds for us.

Not before 1770, when Bishop Percy translated Mallet's *Northern Antiquities,* was anything known here of Iceland, or its literature. Only within the latter part of the nineteenth century has it been studied, and little has been done as yet. It is, however, becoming ever clearer, and to an increasing number, how supremely important is Icelandic as a word-hoard to the English-speaking peoples, and that in its legend, song, and story there is a very mine of noble and pleasant beauty and high manhood. That which has been done, one may hope, is but the beginning of a great new birth, that shall give back to our language and literature all that heedlessness and ignorance bid fair for awhile to destroy.

The Scando-Gothic peoples who poured southward and westward over Europe, to shake empires and found kingdoms, to meet Greek and Roman in conflict, and levy tribute everywhere, had kept up their constantly-recruited waves of incursion, until they had raised a barrier of their own

blood. It was their own kin, the sons of earlier invaders, who stayed the landward march of the Northmen in the time of Charlemagne. To the Southlands their road by land was henceforth closed. Then begins the day of the Vikings, who, for two hundred years and more, "held the world at ransom." Under many and brave leaders they first of all came round the "Western Isles"[1] toward the end of the eighth century; soon after they invaded Normandy, and harried the coasts of France; gradually they lengthened their voyages until there was no share of the then known world upon which they were unseen or unfelt. A glance at English history will show the large part of it they fill, and how they took tribute from the Anglo-Saxons, who, by the way, were far nearer kin to them than is usually thought. In Ireland, where the old civilisation was falling to pieces, they founded kingdoms at Limerick and Dublin among other places, the last named, of which the first king, Olaf the White, was traditionally descended of Sigurd the Volsung, endured even to the English invasion, when it was taken by men of the same Viking blood a little altered. What effect they produced upon the natives may be seen from the description given by the unknown historian of the *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*:—

"In a word, although there were an hundred hard-steeled iron heads on one neck, and an hundred sharp, ready, cool, never-rusting brazen tongues in each head, and an hundred garrulous, loud, unceasing voices from each tongue, they could not recount, or narrate, or enumerate, or tell what all the Gaedhil suffered in common—both men and women, laity and clergy, old and young, noble and ignoble—of hardship, and of injury, and of oppression, in every house, from these valiant, wrathful, purely pagan people. Even

[1] "West over the Sea" is the word for the British Isles.

though great were this cruelty, oppression, and tyranny, though numerous were the oft-victorious clans of the many-familied Erinn; though numerous their kings, and their royal chiefs, and their princes; though numerous their heroes and champions, and their brave soldiers, their chiefs of valour and renown and deeds of arms; yet not one of them was able to give relief, alleviation, or deliverance from that oppression and tyranny, from the numbers and multitudes, and the cruelty and the wrath of the brutal, ferocious, furious, untamed, implacable hordes by whom that oppression was inflicted, because of the excellence of their polished, ample, treble, heavy, trusty, glittering corslets; and their hard, strong, valiant swords; and their well-riveted long spears; and their ready, brilliant arms of valour besides; and because of the greatness of their achievements and of their deeds, their bravery and their valour, their strength, and their venom, and their ferocity, and because of the excess of their thirst and their hunger for the brave, fruitful, nobly-inhabited, full of cataracts, rivers, bays, pure, smooth-plained, sweet grassy land of Erinn"—(pp. 52-53). Some part of this, however, must be abated, because the chronicler is exalting the terror-striking enemy that he may still further exalt his own people, the Dal Cais, who did so much under Brian Boroimhe to check the inroads of the Northmen.

Viking earldoms also were the Orkneys, Faroes, and Shetlands. So late as 1171, in the reign of Henry II., the year after Beckett's murder, Earl Sweyn Asleifsson of Orkney, who had long been the terror of the western seas, "fared a sea-roving" and scoured the western coast of England, Man, and the east of Ireland, but was killed in an attack on his kinsmen of Dublin. He used to go upon a regular plan that may be taken as typical of the

homely manner of most of his like in their cruising: "Sweyn had in the spring hard work, and made them lay down very much seed, and looked much after it himself. But when that toil was ended, he fared away every spring on a viking-voyage, and harried about among the southern isles and Ireland, and came home after midsummer. That he called spring-viking. Then he was at home until the corn-fields were reaped down, and the grain seen to and stored. Then he fared away on a viking-voyage, and then he did not come home till the winter was one month off, and that he called his autumn-viking."[1]

Toward the end of the ninth century Harald Fairhair, either spurred by the example of Charlemagne, or really prompted, as Snorre Sturluson tells us, resolved to bring all Norway under him. As Snorre has it in *Heimskringla*: "King Harald sent his men to a girl hight Gyda. . . . The king wanted her for his leman; for she was wondrous beautiful but of high mood withal. Now when the messengers came there and gave their message to her, she made answer that she would not throw herself away even to take a king for her husband, who swayed no greater kingdom than a few districts; 'and methinks,' said she, 'it is a marvel that no king here in Norway will put all the land under him, after the fashion that Gorm the Old did in Denmark, or Eric at Upsala.' The messengers deemed this a dreadfully proud-spoken answer, and asked her what she thought would come of such an one, for Harald was so mighty a man that his asking was good enough for her. But although she had replied to their saying otherwise than they would, they saw no likelihood, for this while, of bearing her along with them against her will, so they made ready to fare back again. When they were ready and the folk

[1] *Orkneyinga Saga.*

followed them out, Gyda said to the messengers—'Now tell to King Harald these my words:—I will only agree to be his lawful wife upon the condition that he shall first, for sake of me, put under him the whole of Norway, so that he may bear sway over that kingdom as freely and fully as King Eric over the realm of Sweden, or King Gorm over Denmark; for only then, methinks, can he be called king of a people.' Now his men came back to King Harald, bringing him the words of the girl, and saying she was so bold and heedless that she well deserved the king should send a greater troop of people for her, and put her to some disgrace. Then answered the king: 'This maid has not spoken or done so much amiss that she should be punished, but the rather should she be thanked for her words. She has reminded me,' said he, 'of somewhat that it seems wonderful I did not think of before. And now,' added he, 'I make the solemn vow, and take God, who made me and rules over all things, to witness, that never shall I clip or comb my hair until I have subdued all Norway with scatt, and duties, and lordships; or, if not, have died in the seeking.' Guttorm gave great thanks to the king for his oath, saying it was royal work fulfilling royal rede."

The new and strange government that Harald tried to enforce—nothing less than the feudal system in a rough guise—which made those who had hitherto been their own men save at special times, the king's men at all times, and laid freemen under tax, was withstood as long as might be by the sturdy Norsemen. It was only by dint of hard fighting that he slowly won his way, until at Hafrsfirth he finally crushed all effective opposition. But the discontented, "and they were a great multitude," fled oversea to the outlands, Iceland, the Faroes, the Orkneys, and Ireland. The

whole coast of Europe, even to Greece and the shores of the Black Sea, the northern shores of Africa, and the western part of Asia, felt the effects also. Rolf Pad-th'-hoof, son of Harald's dear friend Rognvald, made an outlaw for a cattle-raid within the bounds of the kingdom, betook himself to France, and, with his men, founded a new people and a dynasty.

Iceland has been known for a good many years, but its only dwellers had been Irish Culdees, who sought that lonely land to pray in peace. Now, however, both from Norway and the Western Isles settlers began to come in. Aud, widow of Olaf the White, King of Dublin, came, bringing with her many of mixed blood, for the Gaedhil (pronounced *Gael,* Irish) and the Gaill (pronounced *Gaul,* strangers) not only fought furiously, but made friends firmly, and often intermarried. Indeed, the Westmen were among the first arrivals, and took the best parts of the island—on its western shore, appropriately enough.

After a time the Vikings who had settled in the Isles so worried Harald and his kingdom, upon which they swooped every other while, that he drew together a mighty force, and fell upon them wheresoever he could find them, and followed them up with fire and sword; and this he did twice, so that in those lands none could abide but folk who were content to be his men, however lightly they might hold their allegiance. Hence it was to Iceland that all turned who held to the old ways, and for over sixty years from the first comer there was a stream of hardy men pouring in, with their families and their belongings, simple yeomen, great and warwise chieftains, rich landowners, who had left their land "for the overbearing of King Harald," as the *Landnamabók*[1] has it. "There also we shall escape

[1]Landtaking-book—*Landman,* landtaking, from *at nema land,* whence also the early settlers were called *landnámsmenn.*

the troubling of kings and scoundrels," says the *Vatsdœla-saga.* So much of the best blood left Norway that the king tried to stay the leak by fines and punishments, but in vain.

As his ship neared the shore, the new-coming chief would leave it to the gods as to where he settled. The hallowed pillars of the high seat, which were carried away from his old abode, were thrown overboard, with certain rites, and were let drive with wind and wave until they came ashore. The piece of land which lay next the beach they were flung upon was then viewed from the nearest hill-summit, and the place of the homestead picked out. Then the land was hallowed by being encircled with fire, parcelled among the band, and marked out with boundary-signs; the houses were built, the "town" or home-field walled in, a temple put up, and the settlement soon assumed shape.

In 1100 there were 4500 franklins, making a population of about 50,000, fully three-fourths of whom had a strong infusion of Celtic blood in them. The mode of life was, and is, rather pastoral than aught else. In the 39,200 square miles of the island's area there are now about 250 acres of cultivated land, and although there has been much more in times past, the Icelanders have always been forced to reckon upon flocks and herds as their chief resources, grain of all kinds, even rye, only growing in a few favoured places, and very rarely there; the hay, self-sown, being the only certain harvest. On the coast fishing and fowling were of help, but nine-tenths of the folk lived by their sheep and cattle. Potatoes, carrots, turnips, and several kinds of cabbages have, however, been lately grown with success. They produced their own food and clothing, and could export enough wool, cloth, horn, dried fish, etc., as enabled them to obtain wood for building, iron for tools, honey, wine,

grain, etc., to the extent of their simple needs. Life and work was lotted by the seasons and their changes; outdoor work—fishing, fowling, herding, hay-making, and fuel-getting—filling the long days of summer, while the long, dark winter was used in weaving and a hundred indoor crafts. The climate is not so bad as might be expected, seeing that the island touches the polar circle, the mean temperature at Reykjavik being 39 degrees.

The religion which the settlers took with them into Iceland—the ethnic religion of the Norsefolk, which fought its last great fight at Sticklestead, where Olaf Haraldsson lost his life and won the name of Saint—was, like all religions, a compound of myths, those which had survived from savage days, and those which expressed the various degrees of a growing knowledge of life and better understanding of nature. Some historians and commentators are still fond of the unscientific method of taking a later religion, in this case christianity, and writing down all apparently coincident parts of belief, as having been borrowed from the christian teachings by the Norsefolk, while all that remain they lump under some slighting head.

Every folk has from the beginning of time sought to explain the wonders of nature, and has, after its own fashion, set forth the mysteries of life. The lowest savage, no less than his more advanced brother, has a philosophy of the universe by which he solves the world-problem to his own satisfaction, and seeks to reconcile his conduct with his conception of the nature of things. Now, it is not to be thought, save by *a priori* reasoners, that such a folk as the Northmen—a mighty folk, far advanced in the arts of life, imaginative, literary—should have had no further creed than the totemistic myths of their primitive state; a state they have wholly left ere they enter history. Judging from uni-

versal analogy, the religion of which record remains to us was just what might be looked for at the particular stage of advancement the Northmen had reached. Of course something may have been gained from contact with other peoples—from the Greeks during the long years in which the northern races pressed upon their frontier; from the Irish during the existence of the western viking-kingdoms; but what I particularly warn young students against is the constant effort of a certain order of minds to wrest facts into agreement with their pet theories of religion or what not.

The whole tendency of the more modern investigation shows that the period of myth-transmission is long over ere history begins. The same confusion of different stages of myth-making is to be found in the Greek religion, and indeed in those of all peoples; similar conditions of mind produce similar practices, apart from all borrowing of ideas and manners; in Greece we find snake-dances, bear-dances, swimming with sacred pigs, leaping about in imitation of wolves, dog-feasts, and offering of dogs' flesh to the gods—all of them practices dating from crude savagery, mingled with ideas of exalted and noble beauty, but none now, save a bigot, would think of accusing the Greeks of having stolen all their higher beliefs. Even were some part of the matter of their myths taken from others, yet the Norsemen have given their gods a noble, upright, great spirit, and placed them upon a high level that is all their own.

From the prose Edda the following all too brief statement of the salient points of Norse belief is made up:—"The first and eldest of gods is hight (called) Allfather; he lives from all ages, and rules over all his realm, and sways all things great and small; he smithied heaven and earth, and the lift (sky), and all that belongs to them;

what is most, he made man, and gave him a soul that shall live and never perish; and all men that are right-minded shall live and be with himself in Vingólf; but wicked men fare to Hell, and thence into Niflhell, that is beneath in the ninth world. Before the earth 'twas the morning of time, when yet naught was, nor sand nor sea was there, nor cooling streams. Earth was not found, nor Heaven above; a yawning-gap there was, but grass nowhere.' Many ages ere the earth was shapen was Niflheim made, but first was that land in the southern sphere hight Muspell, that burns and blazes, and may not be trodden by those who are outlandish and have no heritage there. Surtr sits on the border to guard the land; at the end of the world he will fare forth, and harry and overcome all the gods and burn the world with fire. Ere the races were yet mingled, or the folk of men grew, Yawning-gap, which looked towards the north parts, was filled with thick and heavy ice and rime, and everywhere within were fogs and gusts; but the south side of Yawning-gap was lightened by the sparks and gledes that flew out of Muspell-heim; as cold arose out of Niflheim and all things grim, so was that part that looked towards Muspell hot and bright; but Yawning-gap was as light as windless air, and when the blast of heat met the rime, so that it melted and dropped and quickened; from those life-drops there was shaped the likeness of a man, and he was named Ymir; he was bad, and all his kind; and so it is said, when he slept he fell into a sweat; then waxed under his left hand a man and a woman, and one of his feet got a son with the other, and thence cometh the Hrimthursar. The next thing when the rime dropped was that the cow hight Audhumla was made of it; but four milk-rivers ran out of her teats, and she fed Ymir; she licked rime-stones that were salt, and the first day there came

at even, out of the stone's, a man's hair, the second day a man's head, the third day all the man was there. He is named Turi; he was fair of face, great and mighty; he gat a son named Bör, who took to him Besla, daughter of Bölthorn, the giant, and they had three sons, Odin, Vili, and Ve. Bör's sons slew Ymir the giant, but when he fell there ran so much blood out of his wounds that all the kin of the Hrimthursar were drowned, save Hvergelmir and his household, who got away in a boat. Then Bör's sons took Ymir and bore him into the midst of Yawning-gap, and made of him the earth; of his blood seas and waters, of his flesh earth was made; they set the earth fast, and laid the sea round about it in a ring without; of his bones were made rocks; stones and pebbles of his teeth and jaws and the bones that were broken; they took his skull and made the lift thereof, and set it up over the earth with four sides, and under each corner they set dwarfs, and they took his brain and cast it aloft, and made clouds. They took the sparks and gledes that went loose, and had been cast out of Muspellheim, and set them in the lift to give light; they gave resting-places to all fires, and set some in the lift; some fared free under it, and they gave them a place and shaped their goings.

"A wondrous great smithying, and deftly done. The earth is fashioned round without, and there beyond, round about it lies the deep sea; and on that sea-strand the gods gave land for an abode to the giant kind, but within on the earth made they a burg round the world against restless giants, and for this burg reared they the brows of Ymir, and called the burg Midgard. The gods went along the sea-strand and found two stocks, and shaped out of them men; the first gave soul and life, the second wit and will to move, the third face, hearing, speech, and eyesight. They gave them cloth-

ing and names; the man Ask and the woman Embla; thence was mankind begotten, to whom an abode was given under Midgard. Then next Bör's sons made them a burg in the midst of the world, that is called Asgard; there abode the gods and their kind, and wrought thence many tidings and feats, both on earth and in the sky. Odin, who is hight Allfather, for that he is the father of all men and gods, sat there in his high seat, seeing over the whole world and each man's doings, and knew all things that he saw. His wife was called Frigg, and their offspring is the Asa-stock, who dwell in Asgard and the realms about it, and all that stock are known to be gods.

"The daughter and wife of Odin was Earth, and of her he got Thor, him followed strength and sturdiness, thereby quells he all things quick; the strongest of all gods and men, he has also three things of great price, the hammer Mjölnir, the best of strength belts, and when he girds that about him waxes his god strength one-half, and his iron gloves that he may not miss for holding his hammer haft. Balder is Odin's second son, and of him it is good to say, he is fair and bright in face, and hair, and body, and him all praise; he is wise and fair-spoken and mild, and that nature is in him none may withstand his doom. Tyr is daring and best of mood; there is a saw that he is tyrstrong who is before other men and never yields; he is also so wise that it is said he is tyrlearned who is wise. Bragi is famous for wisdom, and best in tongue-wit, and cunning speech, and song-craft. And many other are there, good and great; and one, Loki, fair of face, ill in temper and fickle of mood, is called the backbiter of the Asa, and speaker of evil redes and shame of all gods and men; he has above all that craft called sleight, and cheats all in all things.

"Among the children of Loki are Fenris-wolf and Mid-

gards-worm; the second lies about all the world in the deep sea, holding his tail in his teeth, though some say Thor has slain him; but Fenris-wolf is bound until the doom of the gods, when gods and men shall come to an end, and earth and heaven be burnt, when he shall slay Odin. After this the earth shoots up from the sea, and it is green and fair, and the fields bear unsown, and gods and men shall be alive again, and sit in fair halls and talk of old tales and the tidings that happened aforetime.

"The head-seat, or holiest-stead, of the gods is at Yggdrasil's ash, which is of all trees best and biggest; its boughs are spread over the whole world and stand above heaven; one root of the ash is in heaven, and under the root is the right holy spring; there hold the gods doom every day; the second root is with the Hrimthursar, where before was Yawning-gap; under that root is Mímir's spring, where knowledge and wit lie hidden; thither came Allfather and begged a drink, but got it not before he left his eye in pledge; the third root is over Niflheim, and the worm Nidhogg gnaws the root beneath. A fair hall stands under the ash by the spring, and out of it come three maidens, Norns, named Has-been, Being, Will-be, who shape the lives of men; there are beside other Norns, who come to every man that is born to shape his life, and some of these are good and some evil.

"In the boughs of an ash sits an eagle, wise in much, and between his eyes sits the hawk Vedrfalnir; the squirrel Ratatöskr runs up and down along the ash, bearing words of hate betwixt the eagle and the worm. Those Norns who abide by the holy spring draw from it every day water, and take the clay that lies around the well, and sprinkle them up over the ash for that its boughs should not wither or rot. All those men that have fallen in the fight, and have

borne wounds and toil unto death, from the beginning of the world, are come to Odin in Valhall; a very great throng is there, and many more shall yet come; the flesh of the boar Sœrímnir is sodden for them every day, and he is whole again at even; and the mead they drink that flows from the teats of the she-goat Heidhrun. The meat Odin has on his board he gives to his two wolves, Geri and Freki, and he needs no meat, for wine is to him both meat and drink; ravens twain sit on his shoulders, and say into his ear all tidings that they see and hear; they are called Huginn and Muninn (mind and memory); them sends he at dawn to fly over the whole world, and they come back at breakfast-tide, thereby becomes he wise in many tidings, and for this men call him Raven's-god. Every day, when they have clothed them, the heroes put on their arms and go out into the yard and fight and fell each other; that is their play, and when it looks toward mealtime, then ride they home to Valhall and sit down to drink. For murders and men forsworn is a great hall, and a bad, and the doors look northward; it is altogether wrought of adder-backs like a wattled house, but the worms' heads turn into the house, and blow venom, so that rivers of venom run along the hall, and in those rivers must such men wade forever." There was no priest-class; every chief was priest for his own folks, offering sacrifice, performed ceremonies, and so on.

In politics the homestead, with its franklin-owner, was the unit; the *thing,* or hundred-moot, the primal organisation, and the *godord,* or chieftainship, its tie. The chief who had led a band of kinsmen and followers to the new country, taken possession of land, and shared it among them, became their head-ruler and priest at home, speaker and president of their Thing, and their representative in

any dealings with neighbouring chiefs and their clients. He was not a feudal lord, for any franklin could change his *godord* as he liked, and the right of "judgment by peers" was in full use. At first there was no higher organisation than the local thing. A central thing, and a speaker to speak a single "law" for the whole island, was instituted in 929, and afterwards the island was divided in four quarters, each with a court, under the Al-thing.

Society was divided only into two classes of men, the free and unfree, though political power was in the hands of the franklins alone; *godi* and thrall ate the same food, spoke the same tongue, wore much the same clothes, and were nearly alike in life and habits. Among the free men there was equality in all but wealth and the social standing that cannot be separated therefrom. The thrall was a serf rather than a slave, and could own a house, etc., of his own. In a generation or so the freeman or landless retainer, if he got a homestead of his own, was the peer of the highest in the land. During the tenth century Greenland was colonised from Iceland, and by the end of the same century christianity was introduced into Iceland, but made at first little difference in the arrangements of society. In the thirteenth century, disputes over the power and jurisdiction of the clergy led, with other matters, to civil war, ending in submission to Norway, and the breaking down of all the native great houses. Although life under the commonwealth had been rough and irregular, it had been free and varied, breeding heroes and men of mark; but the "law and order" now brought in left all on a dead level of peasant proprietorship, without room for hope or opening for ambition. An alien governor ruled the island, which was divided under him into local counties, administered by sheriffs appointed by the king of Norway.

The Al-thing was replaced by a royal court, the local work of the local things was taken by a subordinate of the sheriff, and things, quarter-courts, trial by jury, and all the rest, were swept away to make room for these "improvements," which have lasted with few changes into this century. In 1380 the island passed under the rule of Denmark, and so continues. During the fifteenth century the English trade was the only link between Iceland and the outer world; the Danish government weakened that link as much as it could, and sought to shut in and monopolise everything Icelandic; under the deadening effect of such rule it is no marvel that everything found a lower level, and many things went out of existence for lack of use. In the sixteenth century there is little to record but the Reformation, which did little good, if any, and the ravages of English, Gascon, and Algerine pirates who made havoc on the coast; they appear toward the close of the century and disappear early in the seventeenth.

In the eighteenth century small-pox, sheep disease, famine, and the terrible eruptions of 1765 and 1783, follow one another swiftly and with terrible effect. At the beginning of the last century Iceland, however, began to shake off the stupor her ill-hap had brought upon her, and as European attention had been drawn to her, she was listened to. Newspapers, periodicals, and a Useful Knowledge Society were started; then came free trade, and the "home-rule" struggle, which met with partial success in 1874, and is still being carried on. A colony, Gimli, in far-off Canada, has been formed of Icelandic emigrants, and large numbers have left their mother-land; but there are many co-operative societies organized now, which it is hoped will be able to so revive the old resources of the island as to make provision for the old population and ways of life. There is now again a rep-

resentative central council, but very many of the old rights and powers have not been yet restored. The condition of society is peculiar—absence of towns, social equality, no abject poverty or great wealth, rarity of crime, making it easy for the whole country to be administered as a co-operative commonwealth without the great and striking changes rendered necessary by more complicated systems.

Iceland has always borne a high name for learning and literature; on both sides of their descent her people inherited special poetic power. Some of the older Eddaic fragments attest the great reach and deep overpowering strength of imagination possessed by their Norse ancestors; and they themselves had been quickened by a new leaven. During the first generations of the "land-taking" a great school of poetry which had arisen among the Norsemen of the Western Isles was brought by them to Iceland. The poems then produced are quite beyond parallel with those of any Teutonic language for centuries after their date, which lay between the beginning of the ninth and the end of the tenth centuries. Through the Greenland colony also came two, or perhaps more, great poems of this western school. This school grew out of the stress and storm of the viking life, with its wild adventure and varied commerce, and the close contact with an artistic and inventive folk, possessed of high culture and great learning.

The infusion of Celtic blood, however slight it may have been, had also something to do with the swift intense feeling and rapidity of passion of the earlier Icelandic poets. They are hot-headed and hot-hearted, warm, impulsive, quick to quarrel or to love, faithful, brave; ready with sword or song to battle with all comers, or to seek adventure wheresoever it might be found. They leave Iceland young, and wander at their will to different courts of northern

Europe, where they are always held in high honour. Gunnlaug Worm-tongue[1] in 1004 came to England, after being in Norway, as the saga says:—"Now sail Gunnlaug and his fellows into the English main, and come at autumntide south to London Bridge, where they hauled ashore their ship. Now, at that time King Ethelred, the son of Edgar, ruled over England, and was a good lord; the winter he sat in London. But in those days there was the same tongue in England as in Norway and Denmark; but the tongues changed when William the Bastard won England, for thenceforward French went current there, for he was of French kin. Gunnlaug went presently to the king, and greeted him well and worthily. The king asked him from what land he came, and Gunnlaug told him all as it was. 'But,' said he, 'I have come to meet thee, lord, for that I have made a song on thee, and I would that it might please thee to hearken to that song.' The king said it should be so, and Gunnlaug gave forth the song well and proudly, and this is the burden thereof—

> " 'As God are all folk fearing
> The free lord King of England,
> Kin of all kings and all folk,
> To Ethelred the head bow.'

The king thanked him for the song, and gave him as song-reward a scarlet cloak lined with the costliest of furs, and golden-broidered down to the hem; and made him his man; and Gunnlaug was with him all the winter, and was well accounted of."

The poems in this volume are part of the wondrous fragments which are all that remain of ancient Scandinavian poetry. Every piece which survives has been garnered by

[1]Snake-tongue—so called from his biting satire.

Vigfusson and Powell in the two volumes of their *Corpus,* where those who seek may find. A long and illustrious line of poets kept alive the old traditions, down even to within a couple of centuries, but the earlier great harvest of song was never again equalled. After christianity had entered Iceland, and that, with other causes, had quieted men's lives, although the poetry which stood to the folk in lieu of music did not die away, it lost the exclusive hold it had upon men's minds. In a time not so stirring, when emotion was not so fervent or so swift, when there was less to quicken the blood, the story that had before found no fit expression but in verse, could stretch its limbs, as it were, and be told in prose. Something of the Irish influence is again felt in this new departure and that marvellous new growth, the saga, that came from it, but is little more than an influence.

Every people find some one means of expression which more than all else suits their mood or their powers, and this the Icelanders found in the saga. This was the life of a hero told in prose, but in set form, after a regular fashion that unconsciously complied with all epical requirements but that of verse—simple plot, events in order of time, set phrases for even the shifting emotion or changeful fortune of a fight or storm, and careful avoidance of digression, comment, or putting forward by the narrator of ought but the theme he has in hand; he himself is never seen.

Something in the perfection of the saga is to be traced to the long winter's evenings, when the whole household, gathered together at their spinning, weaving, and so on, would listen to one of their number who told anew some old story of adventure or achievement. In very truth the saga is a prose epic, and marked by every quality an epic should possess. Growing up while the deeds of dead heroes were fresh in memory, most often recited before the sharers

in such deeds, the saga, in its pure form, never goes from what is truth to its teller. Where the saga, as this one of the Volsungs, is founded upon the debris of songs and poems, even then very old, tales of mythological heroes, of men quite removed from the personal knowledge of the narrator, yet the story is so inwound with the tradition of his race, is so much a part of his thought-life, that every actor in it has for him a real existence. At the feast or gathering, or by the fireside, as men made nets and women spun, these tales were told over; in their frequent repetition by men who believed them, though incident or sequence underwent no change, they would become closer knit, more coherent, and each an organic whole. Gradually they would take a regular and accepted form, which would ease the strain upon the reciter's memory and leave his mind free to adorn the story with fair devices, that again gave help in the making it easier to remember, and thus aided in its preservation.

After a couple of generations had rounded and polished the sagas by their telling and retelling, they were written down for the most part between 1140 and 1220, and so much was their form impressed upon the mind of the folk, that when learned and literary works appeared, they were written in the same style; hence we have histories alike of kingdoms, or families, or miracles, lives of saints, kings, or bishops in saga-form, as well as subjects that seem at first sight even less hopeful.

Of all the stories kept in being by the saga-tellers, and left for our delight, there is none that so epitomises human experience; has within the same space so much of nature and of life; so fully expresses the temper and genius of the Northern folk, as that of the Volsungs and Niblungs, which has in varied shapes entered into the literature of many lands. In the beginning there is no doubt that the story

belonged to the common ancestral folk of all the Teutonic or Scando-Gothic peoples in the earliest days of their wanderings. Whether they came from the Hindú Kúsh, or originated in Northern Europe, brought it with them from Asia, or evolved it among the mountains and rivers it has taken for scenery, none know nor can; but each branch of their descendants has it in one form or another, and as the Icelanders were the very crown and flower of the northern folk, so also the story which is the peculiar heritage of that folk received in their hands its highest expression and most noble form. The oldest shape in which we have it is in the Eddaic poems, some of which date from unnumbered generations before the time to which most of them are usually ascribed, the time of the viking-kingdoms in the Western Isles. In these poems the only historical name is that of Attila, the great Hun leader, who filled so large a part of the imagination of the people whose power he had broken. There is no doubt that, in the days when the kingdoms of the Scando-Goths reached from the North Cape to the Caspian, that some earlier great king performed his part; but, after the striking career of Attila, he became the recognized type of a powerful foreign potentate. All the other actors are mythic-heroic. Of the Eddaic songs only fragments now remain, but ere they perished there arose from them a saga, viz.: that now given to the readers herein. The so-called Anglo-Saxons brought part of the story to England in Beowulf; in which also appear some incidents that are again given in the Icelandic saga of Grettir the Strong. Most widely known is the form taken by the story in the hands of an unknown medieval German poet, who, from the broken ballads then surviving, wrote the *Nibelungenlied,* or more properly Nibelungen Nôt (The Need of the Niblungs). In this the characters are all renamed, some being more or less

historical actors in mid-European history, as Theodoric of the East-Goths, for instance.

The whole of the earlier part of the story has disappeared, and though Siegfried (Sigurd) has slain a dragon, there is nothing to connect it with the fate that follows the treasure; Andvari, the Volsungs, Fafnir, and Regin are all forgotten; the mythological features have become faint, and the general air of the whole is that of medieval romance. The sword Gram is replaced by Balmung, and the Helm of Awing by the Tarn-cap—the former with no gain, the latter with great loss. The curse of Andvari, which in the saga is grimly real, working itself out with slow, sure steps that no power of god or man can turn aside, in the medieval poem is but a mere scenic effect, a strain of mystery and magic, that runs through the changes of the story with much added picturesqueness, but that has no obvious relation to the working-out of the plot, or fulfilment of their destiny by the different characters. Brynhild loses a great deal, and is a poor creature when compared with herself in the saga; Grimhild and her fateful drink have gone; Gudrun (Chriemhild) is much more complex, but not more tragic; one new character, Rudiger, appears as the type of chivalry; but Sigurd (Siegfried) the central figure, though he has lost by the omission of so much of his life, is, as before, the embodiment of all the virtues that were dear to northern hearts. Brave, strong, generous, dignified, and utterly truthful, he moves amid a tangle of tragic events, overmastered by a mighty fate, and in life or death is still a hero without stain or flaw. It is no wonder that he survives to this day in the national songs of the Faroe Islands and in the folk-ballads of Denmark; that his legend should have been mingled with northern history through Ragnar Lodbrog, or southern through Attila and Theodoric; or that it should have inspired Wil-

liam Morris in producing the one great English epic of the century; and Richard Wagner in the mightiest among his music-dramas. Of the story as told in the saga there is no need here to speak, for to read it, as may be done a few pages further on, is that not better than to read about it? But it may be urged upon those that are pleased and moved by the passion and power, the strength and deep truth of it, to find out more than they now know of the folk among whom it grew, and the land in which they dwelt. In so doing they will come to see how needful are a few lessons from the healthy life and speech of those days, to be applied in the bettering of our own.

H. HALLIDAY SPARLING.

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE.

In offering to the reader this translation of the most complete and dramatic form of the great Epic of the North, we lay no claim to special critical insight, nor do we care to deal at all with vexed questions, but are content to abide by existing authorities, doing our utmost to make our rendering close and accurate, and, if it might be so, at the same time, not over prosaic: it is to the lover of poetry and nature, rather than to the student, that we appeal to enjoy and wonder at this great work, now for the first time, strange to say, translated into English: this must be our excuse for speaking here, as briefly as may be, of things that will seem to the student over well known to be worth mentioning, but which may give some ease to the general reader who comes across our book.

The prose of the Völsunga Saga was composed probably some time in the twelfth century, from floating traditions no doubt; from songs which, now lost, were then known, at least in fragments, to the Sagaman; and finally from songs, which, written down about his time, are still existing.

Except for the short snatch, in our translation, nothing is now left of these till we come to the episode of Helgi Hundings-bane, Sigurd's half-brother; there are two songs left relating to this, from which the prose is put together; to a certain extent they cover the same ground; but

the latter half of the second is, wisely as we think, left untouched by the Sagaman, as its interest is of itself too great not to encumber the progress of the main story.

Of the next part of the Saga, the deaths of Sinfjotli and Sigmund, and the journey of Queen Hjordis to the court of King Alf, there is no trace left of any metrical origin; but we meet the Edda once more where Regin tells the tale of his kin to Sigurd, and where Sigurd defeats and slays the sons of Hunding: this lay is known as the Lay of Regin.

In the slaying of the Dragon the Saga adheres very closely to the Lay of Fafnir; for the insertion of the song of the birds to Sigurd the present translators are responsible.

Then comes the waking of Brynhild, and her wise redes to Sigurd, taken from the Lay of Sigrdrifa, the greater part of which, in its metrical form, is inserted by the Sagaman into his prose.

Of Sigurd at Hlymdale, of Gudrun's dream, the magic potion of Grimhild, the wedding of Sigurd consequent on that potion; of the wooing of Brynhild for Gunnar, her marriage to him, of the quarrel of the Queens, the brooding grief and wrath of Brynhild, and the interview of Sigurd with her—of all this, the most dramatic and best-considered part of the tale, there is now no more left that retains its metrical form than the few snatches preserved by the Sagaman, though many of the incidents are alluded to in other poems.

The grand poem, called the Hell-ride of Brynhild, is not represented directly by anything in the prose except that the Sagaman has supplied from it a link or two wanting in the Lay of Sigrdrifa.

The betrayal and slaughter of the Giukings or Niblungs, and the fearful end of Atli and his sons, and court, are recounted in two lays, called the Lays of Atli; the longest

of these, the Greenland Lay of Atli, is followed closely by the Sagaman.

The end of Gudrun, of her daughter by Sigurd, and of her sons by her last husband Jonakr, treated of in the last four chapters of the Saga, are very grandly and poetically given in the songs called the Whetting of Gudrun, and the Lay of Hamdir.

As to the literary quality of this work we might say much, but we think we may well trust the reader of poetic insight to break through whatever entanglement of strange manners or unused element may at first trouble him, and to meet the nature and beauty with which it is filled: we cannot doubt that such a reader will be intensely touched by finding amidst all its wildness and remoteness, such a startling realism, such subtility, such close sympathy with all the passions that may move himself to-day.

In conclusion, we must again say how strange it seems to us, that this Volsung Tale, which is in fact an unversified poem, should never before have been translated into English. For this is the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks—to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been—a story too—then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us.

It is therefore the ardent hope of the translators, as it is also of the publishers, that this volume may not only afford pleasure and profit to a large number of cultured readers, but that it may serve to create and powerfully promote interest in the history and literature of our Northern ancestors; that Englishmen, Americans, Germans may come to know and appreciate with honorable pride the deeds, the valor, the glorious record of that liberty loving, intellectual and virile

race from which we are descended. May it no longer be said, to our shame, that Americans, Germans, Englishmen hold in higher esteem the story of Greek, Roman and Persian conquerors, the deeds of alien peoples, than the heroism, the mythology, the poetic grandeur of our ancient Gothic forebears whose language, fables, nursery-tales, and minstrelsy are inseparable components of our literature, our laws, and our liberties.

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THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO ARE MOST NOTEWORTHY IN THIS STORY.

VOLSUNGS.

Sigi, son of Odin.
Rerir, son of Sigi, king of Hunland.
Volsung, son of Rerir.
Sigmund, son
Signy, daughter } of Volsung.
Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and Signy.
Helgi, son of Sigmund by Borgny.
SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE, posthumous son of Sigmund by Hjordis.
Swanhild, his daughter, by GUDRUN, Gjuki's daughter.

PEOPLE WHO DEAL WITH THE VOLSUNGS BEFORE SIGURD MEETS BRYNHILD.

Siggeir, king of Gothland, husband of Signy.
Borgny, first wife of Sigmund.
Hjordis, his second wife.
King Eylimi, her father.
Hjalprek, king of Denmark.
Alf, his son, second husband of Hjordis.
Regin, the king's smith.
Fafnir, his brother, turned into a dragon.
Otter, his brother, slain by Loki.
Hreidmar, the father of these brothers.
Andvari, a dwarf, first owner of the hoard of the Niblungs, on which he laid a curse when it was taken from him by Loki.

GJUKINGS OR NIBLUNGS.

King Gjuki.
Grimhild, his wife.
Gunnar,
Hogni, } sons of Gjuki.
Guttorm,
GUDRUN, daughter of Gjuki, wife of SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

BUDLUNGS.

King Budli.
Atli, his son, second husband of GUDRUN.
BRYNHILD, daughter of Budli, first betrothed and love of SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE, wife of Gunnar, son of Gjuki.
Bekkhild, daughter of Budli, wife of Heimir of Hlymdale.

OTHERS WHO DEAL WITH SIGURD AND THE GJUKINGS.

Heimer of Hlymdale, foster-father of BRYNHILD.
Glaumvor, second wife of Gunnar.
Kostbera, wife of Hogni.
Vingi, an evil counsellor of King Atli.
Niblung, the son of Hogni, who helps GUDRUN in the slaying of Atli.
Jormunrek, king of the Goths, husband of Swanhild.
Randver, his son.
Bikki, his evil counsellor.
Jonakr, GUDRUN'S third husband.
Sorli, Hamdir, and Erp, the sons of Jonakr and GUDRUN.

THE STORY

OF THE

VOLSUNGS AND NIBLUNGS.

1.—OF SIGI, THE SON OF ODIN.

HERE begins the tale, and tells of a man who was named Sigi, and called of men the son of Odin; another man withal is told of in the tale, hight (named) Skadi, a great man and mighty of his hands; yet was Sigi the mightier and the higher of kin, according to the speech of men of that time. Now Skadi had a thrall with whom the story must deal somewhat, Bredi by name, who was called after that work which he had to do; in prowess and might of hand he was equal to men who were held more worthy, yea, and better than some thereof.

Now it is to be told that, on a time, Sigi fared to the hunting of the deer, and the thrall with him; and they hunted deer day-long till the evening; and when they gathered together their prey in the evening, lo, greater and more by far was that which Bredi had slain than Sigi's prey; and this thing he much disliked, and he said that great wonder it was that a very thrall should out-do him in the hunting of deer; so he fell on him and slew

him, and buried the body of him thereafter in a snow-drift. Then he went home at the evening tide and says that Bredi had ridden away from him into the wild-wood. "Soon was he out of my sight," he says, "and naught more I wot of him."

Skadi misdoubted the tale of Sigi, and deemed that this was a guile of his, and that he would have slain Bredi. So he sent men to seek for him, and to such an end came their seeking, that they found him in a certain snow-drift; then said Skadi, that men should call that snow-drift Bredi's Drift from henceforth; and thereafter have folk followed, so that in such wise they call every drift that is right great.

Thus it is well seen that Sigi has slain the thrall and murdered him; so he is given forth to be a wolf in holy places,[1] and may no more abide in the land with his father; therewith Odin bare him fellowship from the land, so long a way, that right long it was, and made no stay till he brought him to certain war-ships. So Sigi falls to lying out a-warring with the strength that his father gave him or ever they parted; and happy was he in his warring, and ever prevailed, till he brought it about that he won by his wars land and lordship at the last; and thereupon he took to him a noble wife, and became a great and mighty king, and ruled over the land of the Huns, and was the greatest of warriors. He had a son by his wife, who was called Rerir, who grew up in his father's house, and soon became great of growth, and shapely.

[1] "Wolf in holy places," a man put out of the pale of society for his crimes, an outlaw.

2.—OF THE BIRTH OF VOLSUNG, THE SON OF RERIR, WHO WAS THE SON OF SIGI.

Now Sigi grew old, and had many to envy him, so that at last those turned against him whom he trusted most; yea, even the brothers of his wife; for these fell on him at his unwariest, when there were few with him to withstand them, and brought so many against him, that they prevailed against him, and there fell Sigi and all his folk with him. But Rerir, his son, was not in this trouble, and he brought together so mighty a strength of his friends and the great men of the land, that he got to himself both the lands and kingdom of Sigi his father; and so now, when he deems that the feet under him stand firm in his rule, then he calls to mind that which he had against his mother's brothers, who had slain his father. So the king gathers together a mighty army, and therewith falls on his kinsmen, deeming that if he made their kinship of small account, yet none the less they had first wrought evil against him. So he wrought his will herein, in that he departed not from strife before he had slain all his father's banesmen, though dreadful the deed seemed in every wise. So now he gets land, lordship, and fee, and is become a mightier man than his father before him.

Much wealth won in war gat Rerir to himself, and wedded a wife withal, such as he deemed meet for him, and long they lived together, but had no child to take the heritage after them; and ill-content they both were with that, and prayed the Gods with heart and soul that they might get them a child. And so it is said that Odin hears

their prayer, and Freyja no less hearkens wherewith they prayed unto her; so she, never lacking for all good counsel, call to her her casket-bearing may,[1] the daughter of Hrimnir the giant, and sets an apple in her hand, and bids her bring it to the king. She took the apple, and did on her the gear of a crow, and went flying till she came whereas the king sat on a mound, and there she let the apple fall into the lap of the king; but he took the apple, and deemed he knew whereto it would avail; so he goes home from the mound to his own folk, and came to the queen, and some deal of that apple she ate.

So, as the tale tells, the queen soon knew that she was big with child, but a long time wore or ever she might give birth to the child; so it befell that the king must needs go to the wars, after the custom of kings, that he may keep his own land in peace; and in this journey it came to pass that Rerir fell sick and got his death, being minded to go home to Odin, a thing much desired of many folk in those days.

Now no otherwise it goes with the queen's sickness than heretofore, nor may she be the lighter of her child, and six winters wore away with the sickness still heavy on her; so that at the last she feels that she may not live long; wherefore now she bade cut the child from out of her; and it was done even as she bade; a man-child it was, and great of growth from his birth, as might well be; and they say that the youngling kissed his mother or ever she died; but to him is a name given, and he is called Volsung; and he was king over Hunland in the room of

[1]May (A. S. *mæg*), a maid.

his father. From his early years he was big and strong, and full of daring in all manly deeds and trials, and he became the greatest of warriors, and of good hap in all the battles of his warfaring.

Now when he was fully come to man's estate, Hrimnir the giant sends to him Ljod his daughter; she of whom the tale told, that she brought the apple to Rerir, Volsung's father. So Volsung weds her withal; and long they abode together with good hap and great love. They had ten sons and one daughter, and their eldest son was hight Sigmund, and their daughter Signy; and these two were twins, and in all wise the foremost and the fairest of the children of Volsung the king, and mighty, as all his seed was; even as has been long told from ancient days, and in tales of long ago, with the greatest fame of all men, how that the Volsungs have been great men and high-minded and far above the most of men both in cunning and in prowess and all things high and mighty.

So says the story that king Volsung let build a noble hall in such a wise, that a big oak-tree stood therein, and that the limbs of the tree blossomed fair out over the roof of the hall, while below stood the trunk within it, and the said trunk did men call Branstock.

3.—OF THE SWORD THAT SIGMUND, VOLSUNG'S SON, DREW FROM THE BRANSTOCK.

THERE was a king called Siggeir, who ruled over Gothland, a mighty king and of many folk; he went to meet Volsung, the king, and prayed him for Signy his daughter to wife; and the king took his talk well, and his sons

withal, but she was loth thereto, yet she bade her father rule in this as in all other things that concerned her; so the king took such rede[1] that he gave her to him, and she was betrothed to King Siggeir; and for the fulfilling of the feast and the wedding, was King Siggeir to come to the house of King Volsung. The king got ready the feast according to his best might, and when all things were ready, came the king's guests and King Siggeir withal at the day appointed, and many a man of great account had Siggeir with him.

The tale tells that great fires were made endlong the hall, and the great tree aforesaid stood midmost thereof; withal folk say that, when as men sat by the fires in the evening, a certain man came into the hall unknown of aspect to all men; and suchlike array he had, that over him was a spotted cloak, and he was bare-foot, and had linen-breeches knit tight even unto the bone, and he had a sword in his hand as he went up to the Branstock, and a slouched hat upon his head; huge he was, and seeming-ancient, and one-eyed.[2] So he drew his sword and smote it into the tree-trunk so that it sank in up to the hilt; and all held back from greeting the man. Then he took up the word, and said—

"Whoso draweth this sword from this stock, shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than is this."

Therewith out went the old man from the hall, and none knew who he was or whither he went.

[1]Rede (A. S. *rœd*), counsel, advice, a tale or prophecy.

[2]The man is Odin, who is always so represented, because he gave his eye as a pledge for a draught from the fountain of Mimir, the source of all wisdom.

Now men stand up, and none would fain be the last to lay hand to the sword, for they deemed that he would have the best of it who might first touch it; so all the noblest went thereto first, and then the others, one after other; but none who came thereto might avail to pull it out, for in nowise would it come away howsoever they tugged at it; but now up comes Sigmund, King Volsung's son, and sets hand to the sword, and pulls it from the stock, even as if it lay loose before him; so good that weapon seemed to all, that none thought he had seen such a sword before; and Siggeir would fain buy it of him at thrice its weight of gold, but Sigmund said—

"Thou mightest have taken the sword no less than I from there whereas it stood, if it had been thy lot to bear it; but now, since it has first of all fallen into my hand, never shalt thou have it, though thou biddest therefor all the gold thou hast."

King Siggeir grew wroth at these words, and deemed Sigmund had answered him scornfully, but whereas he was a wary man and a double-dealing, he made as if he heeded this matter in nowise, yet that same evening he thought how he might reward it, as was well seen afterwards.

4.—HOW KING SIGGEIR WEDDED SIGNY, AND BADE KING VOLSUNG AND HIS SON TO GOTHLAND.

Now it is to be told that Siggeir goes to bed by Signy that night, and the next morning the weather was fair; then says King Siggeir that he will not bide, lest the wind should wax, or the sea grow impassable; nor is it

said that Volsung or his sons letted him herein, and that the less, because they saw that he was fain to get him gone from the feast. But now says Signy to her father—

"I have no will to go away with Siggeir, neither does my heart smile upon him; and I wot, by my fore-knowledge, and from the fetch[1] of our kin, that from this counsel will great evil fall on us if this wedding be not speedily undone."

"Speak in no such wise, daughter!" said he; "for great shame will it be to him, yea, and to us also, to break troth with him, he being sackless;[2] and in naught may we trust him, and no friendship shall we have of him, if these mattters are broken off; but he will pay us back in as evil wise as he may; for that alone is seemly, to hold truly to troth given."

So King Siggeir got ready for home, and before he went from the feast he bade King Volsung, his father-in-law, come see him in Gothland, and all his sons with him, whenas three months should be overpast, and to bring such following with him, as he would have, and as he deemed meet for his honour; and thereby will Siggeir the king pay back for the shortcomings of the wedding feast, in that he would abide thereat but one night only, a thing not according to the wont of men. So King Volsung gave his word to come on the day named, and the kinsmen-in-law parted, and Siggeir went home with his wife.

[1]Fetch; wraith, or familiar spirit.
[2]Sackless (A.S. *sacu*, Icel. *sok*.) blameless.

5.—OF THE SLAYING OF KING VOLSUNG.

Now tells the tale of King Volsung and his sons that they go at the time appointed to Gothland at the bidding of King Siggeir, and put off from the land in three ships, all well manned, and have a fair voyage, and made Gothland late of an evening tide.

But that same night came Signy and called her father and brothers to a privy talk, and told them what she deemed King Siggeir was minded to do, and how that he had drawn together an army no man may meet. "And," says she, "he is minded to do guilefully by you; wherefore I bid you get ye gone back again to your own land, and gather together the mightiest power ye may, and then come back hither and avenge you; neither go ye now to your undoing, for ye shall surely fail not to fall by his wiles if ye turn not on him even as I bid you."

Then spake Volsung the king, "All people and nations shall tell of the word I spake, yet being unborn, wherein I vowed a vow that I would flee in fear from neither fire nor the sword; even so have I done hitherto, and shall I depart therefrom now I am old? Yea, withal never shall the maidens mock these my sons at the games, and cry out at them that they fear death; once alone must all men need die, and from that season shall none escape; so my rede it is that we flee nowhither, but do the work of our hands in as manly wise as we may; a hundred fights have I fought and whiles I had more, and whiles I had less, and yet ever had I the victory, nor shall it ever be heard tell of me that I fled away or prayed for peace."

Then Signy wept right sore, and prayed that she might

not go back to King Siggeir, but King Volsung answered—

"Thou shalt surely go back to thine husband, and abide with him, howsoever it fares with us."

So Signy went home, and they abode there that night; but in the morning, as soon as it was day, Volsung bade his men arise and go aland and make them ready for battle; so they went aland, all of them all-armed, and had not long to wait before Siggeir fell on them with all his army, and the fiercest fight there was betwixt them; and Siggeir cried on his men to the onset all he might; and so the tale tells that King Volsung and his sons went eight times right through Siggeir's folk that day, smiting and hewing on either hand, but when they would do so even once again, King Volsung fell amidst his folk and all his men withal, saving his ten sons, for mightier was the power against them than they might withstand.

But now are all his sons taken, and laid in bonds and led away; and Signy was ware withal that her father was slain, and her brothers taken and doomed to death; that she called King Siggeir apart to talk with her, and said—

"This will I pray of thee, that thou let not slay my brothers hastily, but let them be set awhile in the stocks, for home to me comes the saw that says, *Sweet to eye while seen*: but longer life I pray not for them, because I wot well that my prayer will not avail me."

Then answered Siggeir—

"Surely thou art mad and witless, praying thus for more bale for thy brothers than their present slaying; yet this will I grant thee, for the better it likes me the

more they must bear, and the longer their pain is or ever death come to them."

Now he let it be done even as she prayed, and a mighty beam was brought and set on the feet of those ten brethren in a certain place of the wild-wood, and there they sit daylong until night; but at midnight, as they sat in the stocks, there came on them a she-wolf from out of the wood; old she was, and both great and evil of aspect; and the first thing she did was to bite one of those brethren till he died, and then she ate him up withal, and went on her way.

But the next morning Signy sent a man to the brethren, even one whom she most trusted, to wot of the tidings; and when he came back he told her that one of them was dead, and great and grievous she deemed it, if they should all fare in like wise, and yet naught might she avail them.

Soon is the tale told thereof: nine nights together came the she-wolf at midnight, and each night slew and ate up one of the brethren, until all were dead, save Sigmund only; so now, before the tenth night came, Signy sent that trusty man to Sigmund, her brother, and gave honey into his hand, bidding him do it over Sigmund's face, and set a little deal of it in his mouth; so he went to Sigmund and did as he was bidden, and then came home again; and so the next night came the she-wolf according to her wont, and would slay him and eat him even as his brothers; but now she sniffs the breeze from him, whereas he was anointed with the honey, and licks his face all over with her tongue, and then thrusts her

tongue into the mouth of him. No fear he had thereof, but caught the she-wolf's tongue betwixt his teeth, and so hard she started back thereat, and pulled herself away so mightily, setting her feet against the stocks, that all was riven asunder; but he ever held so fast that the tongue came away by the roots, and thereof she had her bane.

But some men say that this same she-wolf was the mother of King Siggeir, who had turned herself into this likeness by troll's lore and witchcraft.

6.—OF HOW SIGNY SENT THE CHILDREN OF HER AND SIGGEIR TO SIGMUND.

Now whenas Sigmund is loosed and the stocks are broken, he dwells in the woods and holds himself there; but Signy sends yet again to wot of the tidings, whether Sigmund were alive or no; but when those who were sent came to him, he told them all as it had betid, and how things had gone betwixt him and the wolf; so they went home and tell Signy the tidings; but she goes and finds her brother, and they take counsel in such wise as to make a house underground in the wild-wood; and so things go on a while, Signy hiding him there, and sending him such things as he needed; but King Siggeir deemed that all the Volsungs were dead.

Now Siggeir had two sons by his wife, whereof it is told that when the eldest was ten winters old, Signy sends him to Sigmund, so that he might give him help, if he would in any wise strive to avenge his father; so the youngling goes to the wood, and comes late in evening-

tide to Sigmund's earth-house; and Sigmund welcomed him in seemly fashion, and said that he should make ready their bread; "but I," said he, "will go seek fire-wood."

Therewith he gives the meal-bag into his hands while he himself went to fetch firing; but when he came back the youngling had done naught at the bread-making. Then asks Sigmund if the bread be ready—

Says the youngling, "I durst not set hand to the meal-sack, because somewhat quick lay in the meal."

Now Sigmund deemed he wotted that the lad was of no such heart as that he would be fain to have him for his fellow; and when he met his sister, Sigmund said that he had come no nigher to the aid of a man though the youngling were with him.

Then said Signy, "Take him and kill him then; for why should such an one live longer?" and even so he did.

So this winter wears, and the next winter Signy sent her next son to Sigmund; and there is no need to make a long tale thereof, for in like wise went all things, and he slew the child by the counsel of Signy.

7.—OF THE BIRTH OF SINFJOTLI THE SON OF SIGMUND.

So ON a tide it befell as Signy sat in her bower, that there came to her a witch-wife exceeding cunning, and Signy talked with her in such wise, "Fain am I," says she, "that we should change semblances together."

She says, "Even as thou wilt then."

And so by her wiles she brought it about that they

changed semblances, and now the witch-wife sits in Signy's place according to her rede, and goes to bed by the king that night, and he knows not that he has other than Signy beside him.

But the tale tells of Signy, that she fared to the earth-house of her brother, and prayed him give her harbouring for the night; "For I have gone astray abroad in the woods, and know not whither I am going."

So he said she might abide, and that he would not refuse harbour to one lone woman, deeming that she would scarce pay back his good cheer by tale-bearing: so she came into the house, and they sat down to meat, and his eyes were often on her, and a goodly and fair woman she seemed to him; but when they are full, then he says to her, that he is right fain that they should have but one bed that night; she nowise turned away therefrom, and so for three nights together he laid her in bed by him.

Thereafter she fared home, and found the witch-wife, and bade her change semblances again, and she did so.

Now as time wears, Signy brings forth a man-child, who was named Sinfjotli, and when he grew up he was both big and strong, and fair of face, and much like unto the kin of the Volsungs, and he was hardly yet ten winters old when she sent him to Sigmund's earth-house; but this trial she had made of her other sons or ever she had sent them to Sigmund, that she had sewed gloves on to their hands through flesh and skin, and they had borne it ill and cried out thereat; and this she now did to Sinfjotli, and he changed countenance in nowise thereat. Then she flayed off the kirtle so that the skin came off with the

sleeves, and said that this would be torment enough for him; but he said—

"Full little would Volsung have felt such a smart as this."

So the lad came to Sigmund, and Sigmund bade him knead their meal up, while he goes to fetch firing; so he gave him the meal-sack, and then went after the wood, and by then he came back had Sinfjotli made an end of his baking. Then asked Sigmund if he had found nothing in the meal.

"I misdoubted me that there was something quick in the meal when I first fell to kneading it, but I have kneaded it all up together, both meal and that which was therein, whatsoever it was."

Then Sigmund laughed out, he said—

"Naught wilt thou eat of this bread to-night, for the most deadly of worms[1] hast thou kneaded up therewith."

Now Sigmund was so mighty a man that he might eat venom and have no hurt therefrom; but Sinfjotli might abide whatso venom came on the outside of him, but might neither eat nor drink thereof.

8.—OF THE DEATH OF KING SIGGEIR AND OF SIGNY.

THE tale tells that Sigmund thought Sinfjotli over young to help him to his revenge, and will first of all harden him with manly deeds; so in summer-tide they fare wide through the woods and slay men for their wealth; Sigmund deems him to take much after the kin of the Volsungs, though he thinks that he is Siggeir's son, and deems him to have the evil heart of his father, with

[1]Serpents.

the might and daring of the Volsungs; withal he must needs think him in nowise a kinsome man, for full oft would he bring Sigmund's wrongs to his memory, and prick him on to slay King Siggeir.

Now on a time as they fare abroad in the woods for the getting of wealth, they find a certain house, and two men with great gold rings asleep therein: now these twain were spell-bound skin-changers,[1] and wolf-skins were hanging up over them in the house; and every tenth day might they come out of those skins; and they were kings' sons: so Sigmund and Sinfjotli do the wolf-skins on them, and then might they nowise come out of them, though forsooth the same nature went with them as heretofore; they howled as wolves howl, and both knew the meaning of that howling; they lay out in the wild-wood, and each went his way; and a word they made betwixt them, that they should risk the onset of seven men, but no more, and that he who was first to be set on should howl in wolfish wise: "Let us not depart from this," says Sigmund, "for thou art young and over-bold, and men will deem the quarry good, when they take thee."

Now each goes his way, and when they were parted, Sigmund meets certain men, and gives forth a wolf's

[1] "Skin-changers" were universally believed in once, in Ireland no less than elsewhere, as see Ari in several places in his history, especially the episode of Dufthach and Storwolf o' Whale. Men possessing the power of becoming wolves at intervals, in the present case compelled to so become, wer-wolves or *loupsgarou,* find large place in medieval story, but were equally well-known in classic times. Belief in them still lingers in parts of Europe where wolves are to be found. Herodotus tells of the Neuri, who assumed once a year the shape of wolves; Pliny says that one of the family of Antæus, chosen by lot annually, became a wolf, and so remained for nine years; Giraldus Cambrensis will have it that Irishmen may become wolves; and Nennius asserts point-blank that "the descendants of wolves are still in Ossory;" they retransform themselves into wolves when they bite. Apuleius, Petronius, and Lucian have similar stories. The Emperor Sigismund convoked a council of theologians in the fifteenth century who decided that wer-wolves did exist.

howl; and when Sinfjotli heard it, he went straightway thereto, and slew them all, and once more they parted. But ere Sinfjotli has fared long through the woods, eleven men meet him, and he wrought in such wise that he slew them all, and was awearied therewith, and crawls under an oak, and there takes his rest. Then came Sigmund thither, and said—

"Why didst thou not call on me?"

Sinfjotli said, "I was loth to call for thy help for the slaying of eleven men."

Then Sigmund rushed at him so hard that he staggered and fell, and Sigmund bit him in the throat. Now that day they might not come out of their wolf-skins: but Sigmund lays the other on his back, and bears him home to the house, and cursed the wolf-gears and gave them to the trolls. Now on a day he saw where two weasels went, and how that one bit the other in the throat, and then ran straightway into the thicket, and took up a leaf and laid it on the wound, and thereon his fellow sprang up quite and clean whole; so Sigmund went out and saw a raven flying with a blade of that same herb to him; so he took it and drew it over Sinfjotli's hurt, and he straightway sprang up as whole as though he had never been hurt. Thereafter they went home to their earth-house, and abode there till the time came for them to put off the wolf-shapes; then they burnt them up with fire, and prayed that no more hurt might come to any one from them; but in that uncouth guise they wrought many famous deeds in the kingdom and lordship of King Siggeir.

Now when Sinfjotli was come to man's estate, Sig-

mund deemed he had tried him fully, and or ever a long time has gone by he turns his mind to the avenging of his father, if so it may be brought about; so on a certain day the twain get them gone from their earth-house, and come to the abode of King Siggeir late in the evening, and go into the porch before the hall, wherein were tuns of ale, and there they lie hid; now the queen is ware of them, where they are, and is fain to meet them; and when they met they took counsel, and were of one mind that Volsung should be revenged that same night.

Now Signy and the king had two children of tender age, who played with a golden toy on the floor, and bowled it along the pavement of the hall, running along with it; but therewith a golden ring from off it trundles away into the place where Sigmund and Sinfjotli lay, and off runs the little one to search for the same, and beholds withal where two men are sitting, big and grimly to look on, with overhanging helms and bright white byrnies;[1] so he runs up the hall to his father, and tells him of the sight he has seen, and thereat the king misdoubts of some guile abiding him; but Signy heard their speech, and arose and took both the children, and went out into the porch to them and said—

"Lo ye! these younglings have bewrayed you; come now therefore and slay them!"

Sigmund says, "Never will I slay thy children for telling of where I lay hid."

But Sinfjotli made little ow of it, but drew his sword and slew them both, and cas them into the hall at King Siggeir's feet.

[1]Byrny (A.S. *byrne*), corslet, cuirass.

Then up stood the king and cried on his men to take those who had lain privily in the porch through the night. So they ran thither and would lay hands on them, but they stood on their defence well and manly, and long he remembered it who was the nighest to them; but in the end they were borne down by many men and taken, and bonds were set upon them, and they were cast into fetters wherein they sit night long.

Then the king ponders what longest and worst of deaths he shall mete out to them; and when morning came he let make a great barrow of stones and turf; and when it was done, let set a great flat stone midmost inside thereof, so that one edge was aloft, the other alow; and so great it was that it went from wall to wall, so that none might pass it.

Now he bids folk take Sigmund and Sinfjotli and set them in the barrow, on either side of the stone, for the worse for them he deemed it, that they might hear each the other's speech, and yet that neither might pass one to the other. But now, while they were covered in the barrow with the turf-slips, thither came Signy, bearing straw with her, and cast it down to Sinfjotli, and bade the thralls hide this thing from the king; they said yea thereto, and therewithal was the barrow closed in.

But when night fell, Sinfjotli said to Sigmund, "Belike we shall scarce need meat for a while, for here has the queen cast swine's flesh into the barrow, and wrapped it round about on the outer side with straw."

Therewith he handles the flesh and finds that therein was thrust Sigmund's sword; and he knew it by the hilt,

as mirk as it might be in the barrow, and tells Sigmund thereof, and of that were they both fain enow.

Now Sinfjotli drave the point of the sword up into the big stone, and drew it hard along, and the sword bit on the stone. With that Sigmund caught the sword by the point, and in this wise they sawed the stone between them, and let not or all the sawing was done that need be done, even as the song sings:

"Sinfjotli sawed.
And Sigmund sawed,
Atwain with main
The stone was done."

Now are they both together loose in the barrow, and soon they cut both through the stone and through iron, and bring themselves out thereof. Then they go home to the hall, whenas all men slept there, and bear wood to the hall, and lay fire therein; and withal the folk therein are waked by the smoke, and by the hall burning over their heads.

Then the king cries out, "Who kindled this fire, I burn withal?"

"Here am I," says Sigmund, "with Sinfjotli, my sister's son; and we are minded that thou shalt wot well that all the Volsungs are not yet dead."

Then he bade his sister come out, and take all good things at his hands, and great honour, and fair atonement in that wise, for all her griefs.

But she answered, "Take heed now, and consider, if I have kept King Siggeir in memory, and his slaying of

Volsung the king! I let slay both my children, whom I deemed worthless for the revenging of our father, and I went into the wood to thee in a witch-wife's shape; and now behold, Sinfjotli is the son of thee and of me both! and therefore has he this so great hardihood and fierceness, in that he is the son of both of Volsung's son and Volsung's daughter; and for this, and for naught else, have I so wrought, that Siggeir might get his bane at last; and all these things have I done that vengeance might fall on him, and that I too might not live long; and merrily now will I die with King Siggeir, though I was naught merry to wed him."

Therewith she kissed Sigmund her brother, and Sinfjotli, and went back again into the fire, and there she died with King Siggeir and all his good men.

But the two kinsmen gathered together folk and ships, and Sigmund went back to his father's land, and drave away thence the king, who had set himself down there in the room of king Volsung.

So Sigmund became a mighty King and far-famed, wise and high-minded; he had to wife one named Borghild, and two sons they had between them, one named Helgi and the other Hamund; and when Helgi was born, Norns came to him,[1] and spake over him, and said that he should be in time to come the most renowned of all kings. Even therewith was Sigmund come home from the wars, and so therewith he gives him the name of

[1] "Norns came to him." Nornir are the fates of the northern mythology. They are three—*Urd*, the past; *Verdandi*, the present; and *Skuld*, the future. They sit beside the fountain of Urd (*Urdarbrunur*), which is below one of the roots of *Yggdrasil*, the world-tree, which tree their office it is to nourish by sprinkling it with the waters of the fountain.

Helgi, and these matters as tokens thereof, Land of Rings, Sun-litten Hill, and Sharp-shearing Sword, and withal prayed that he might grow of great fame, and like unto the kin of the Volsungs.

And so it was that he grew up high-minded, and well-beloved, and above all other men in all prowess; and the story tells that he went to the wars when he was fifteen winters old. Helgi was lord and ruler over the army, but Sinfjotli was gotten to be his fellow herein; and so the twain bare sway thereover.

9.—HOW HELGI, THE SON OF SIGMUND, WON KING HODBROD AND HIS REALM, AND WEDDED SIGRUN.

Now the tale tells that Helgi in his warring met a king hight Hunding, a mighty king, and lord of many men and many lands; they fell to battle together, and Helgi went forth mightily, and such was the end of that fight that Helgi had the victory; King Hunding fell and many of his men with him; whereat Helgi is deemed to have grown greatly in fame because he had slain so mighty a king.

Then the sons of Hunding draw together a great army to avenge their father. Hard was the fight betwixt them; but Helgi goes through the folk of those brothers unto their banner, and there slays these sons of Hunding, Alf and Eyolf, Herward and Hagbard, and wins there a great victory.

Now as Helgi fared from the fight, he met many women right fair and worthy to look on, who rode in exceeding noble array; but one far excelled them all; then

Helgi asked them the name of that their lady and queen, and she named herself Sigrun, and said she was daughter of King Hogni.

Then said Helgi, "Fare home with us: good welcome shall ye have!"

Then said the king's daughter, "Other work lies before us than to drink with thee."

"Yea, and what work, king's daughter?" said Helgi.

She answers, "King Hogni has promised me to Hodbrod, the son of King Granmar, but I have vowed a vow that I will have him to my husband no more than if he were a crow's son and not a king's; and yet will the thing come to pass, but and if thou standest in the way thereof, and goest against him with an army, and takest me away withal; for verily with no king would I rather bide on bolster than with thee."

"Be of good cheer, king's daughter," says he, "for certes he and I shall try the matter, or ever thou be given to him; yea, we shall behold which may prevail against the other; and hereto I pledge my life."

Thereafter, Helgi sent men with money in their hands to summon his folk to him, and all his power is called together to Red-Berg: and there Helgi abode till such time as a great company came to him from Hedinsey; and therewithal came mighty power from Norvi Sound aboard great and fair ships. Then King Helgi called to him the captain of his ships, who was hight Leif, and asked him if he had told over the tale of his army.

"A thing not easy to tell, lord," says he, "on the ships

that came out of Norvi Sound are twelve thousand men, and otherwhere are half as many again."

Then bade King Helgi turn into the firth, called Varin's-firth, and they did so: but now there fell on them so fierce a storm and so huge a sea, that the beat of the waves on board and bow was to hearken to like as the clashing together of high hills broken.

But Helgi bade men fear naught, nor take in any sail, but rather hoist every rag higher than heretofore; but little did they miss of foundering or ever they made land; then came Sigrun, daughter of King Hogni, down on to the beach with a great army, and turned them away thence to a good haven called Gnipalund; but the landsmen see what has befallen and come down to the sea-shore. The brother of King Hodbrod, lord of a land called Swarin's Cairn, cried out to them, and asked them who was captain over that mighty army. Then up stands Sinfjotli, with a helm on his head, bright shining as glass, and a byrny as white as snow; a spear in his hand, and thereon a banner of renown, and a gold-rimmed shield hanging before him; and well he knew with what words to speak to kings—

"Go thou and say, when thou hast made an end of feeding thy swine and thy dogs, and when thou beholdest thy wife again, that here are come the Volsungs, and in this company may King Helgi be found, if Hodbrod be fain of finding him, for his game and his joy it is to fight and win fame, while thou art kissing the handmaids by the fire-side."

Then answered Granmar, "In nowise knowest thou

how to speak seemly things, and to tell of matters remembered from of old, whereas thou layest lies on chiefs and lords; most like it is that thou must have long been nourished with wolf-meat abroad in the wild-woods, and has slain thy brethren; and a marvel it is to behold that thou darest to join thyself to the company of good men and true, thou, who hast sucked the blood of many a cold corpse."

Sinfjotli answered, "Dim belike is grown thy memory now, of how thou wert a witch-wife on Varinsey, and wouldst fain have a man to thee, and chose me to that same office of all the world; and how thereafter thou wert a Valkyria[1] in Asgarth, and it well-nigh came to this, that for thy sweet sake should all men fight; and nine wolf-whelps I begat on thy body in Lowness, and was the father to them all."

Granmar answers, "Great skill of lying hast thou; yet belike the father of naught at all mayest thou be, since thou wert gelded by the giant's daughters of Thrasness; and lo thou art the stepson of King Siggeir, and were wont to lie abroad in wilds and woods with the kin of wolves; and unlucky was the hand wherewith thou slewest thy brethren, making for thyself an exceeding evil name."

Said Sinfjotli, "Mindest thou not then, when thou were stallion Grani's mare, and how I rode thee an amble on Bravoll, and that afterwards thou wert giant Golnir's goat-herd?"

[1]Valkyrja, "Chooser of the elected." The women were so called whom Odin sent to choose those for death in battle who were to join the *Einherjar* in the hall of the elected, *"Val-holl."*

Granmar says, "Rather would I feed fowls with the flesh of thee than wrangle any longer with thee."

Then spake King Helgi, "Better were it for ye, and a more manly deed, to fight, rather than to speak such things as it is a shame even to hearken to; Granmar's sons are no friends of me and of mine, yet are they hardy men none the less."

So Granmar rode away to meet King Hodbrod, at a stead called Sunfells, and the horses of the twain were named Sveipud and Sveggjud. The brothers met in the castle-porch, and Granmar told Hodbrod of the war-news. King Hodbrod was clad in a byrny, and had his helm on his head; he asked—

"What men are anigh; why look ye so wrathful?"

Granmar says, "Here are come the Volsungs, and twelve thousand men of them are afloat off the coast, and seven thousand are at the island called Sok, but at the stead called Grindur is the greatest company of all, and now I deem withal that Helgi and his fellowship have good will to give battle."

Then said the king, "Let us send a message through all our realm, and go against them, neither let any who is fain to fight sit idle at home; let us send word to the sons of Ring, and to King Hogni, and to Alf the Old, for they are mighty warriors."

So the hosts met at Wolfstone, and fierce fight befell there; Helgi rushed forth through the host of his foes, and many a man fell there; at last folk saw a great company of shield-maidens, like burning flames to look on, and there was come Sigrun, the king's daughter. Then

King Helgi fell on King Hodbrod, and smote him, and slew him even under his very banner; and Sigrun cried out—

"Have thou thanks for thy so manly deed! now shall we share the land between us, and a day of great good haps this is to me; and for this deed shalt thou get honour and renown, in that thou hast felled to earth so mighty a king."

So Helgi took to him that realm and dwelt there long, when he had wedded Sigrun, and became a king of great honour and renown, though he has naught more to do with this story.

10.—THE ENDING OF SINFJOTLI, SIGMUND'S SON.

Now the Volsungs fare back home, and have gained great renown by these deeds. But Sinfjotli betook himself to warfare anew; and therewith he had sight of an exceeding fair woman, and yearned above all things for her; but that same woman was wooed also of the brother of Borghild, the king's wife: and this matter they fought out betwixt them, and Sinfjotli slew that king; and thereafter he harried far and wide, and had many a battle and ever gained the day; and he became hereby honoured and renowned above all men; so in autumn tide he came home with many ships and abundant wealth.

Then he told his tidings to the king his father, and he again to the queen, and she for her part bids him get him gone from the realm, and made as if she would in nowise see him. But Sigmund said he would not drive him away, and offered her atonement of gold and great wealth

for her brother's life, albeit he said he had never erst given weregild[1] to any for the slaying of a man, but no fame it was to uphold wrong against a woman.

So seeing she might not get her own way herein, she said, "Have thy will in this matter, O my lord, for it is seemly so to be."

And now she holds the funeral feast for her brother by the aid and counsel of the king, and makes ready all things therefor in the best of wise, and bade thither many great men.

At that feast, Borghild the queen bare the drink to folk, and she came over against Sinfjotli with a great horn, and said—

"Fall to now and drink, fair stepson!"

Then he took the horn to him, and looked therein, and said—

"Nay, for the drink is charmed drink."

Then said Sigmund, "Give it unto me then;" and therewith he took the horn and drank it off.

But the queen said to Sinfjotli, "Why must other men needs drink thine ale for thee?" And she came again the second time with the horn, and said, "Come now and drink!" and goaded him with many words.

And he took the horn, and said—

"Guile is in the drink."

And thereon, Sigmund cried out—

"Give it then unto me!"

Again, the third time, she came to him, and bade him drink off his drink, if he had the heart of a Volsung; then he laid hand on the horn, but said—

[1]Weregild, fine for man-slaying (*wer*, man, and *gild*, a payment).

"Venom is therein."

"Nay, let the lip strain it out then, O son," quoth Sigmund; and by then was he exceeding drunk with drink, and therefore spake he in that wise.

So Sinfjotli drank, and straightway fell down dead to the ground.

Sigmund rose up, and sorrowed nigh to death over him; then he took the corpse in his arms and fared away to the wood, and went till he came to a certain firth; and there he saw a man in a little boat; and that man asked if he would be wafted by him over the firth, and he said yea thereto; but so little was the boat, that they might not all go in it at once, so the corpse was first laid therein, while Sigmund went by the firth-side. But therewith the boat and the man therein vanished away from before Sigmund's eyes.[1]

So thereafter Sigmund turned back home, and drave away the queen, and a little after she died. But Sigmund the king yet ruled his realm, and is deemed ever the greatest champion and king of the old law.

11.—OF KING SIGMUND'S LAST BATTLE, AND OF HOW HE MUST YIELD UP HIS SWORD AGAIN.

THERE was a king called Eylimi, mighty and of great fame, and his daughter was called Hjordis, the fairest and wisest of womankind; and Sigmund hears it told of her that she was meet to be his wife, yea if none else were. So he goes to the house of King Eylimi, who would make a great feast for him, if so be he comes not thither in the guise of a foe. So messages were sent from one to the

[1]The man in the boat is Odin, doubtless.

other that this present journey was a peaceful one, and not for war; so the feast was held in the best of wise and with many a man thereat; fairs were in every place established for King Sigmund, and all things else were done to the aid and comfort of his journey: so he came to the feast, and both kings hold their state in one hall; thither also was come King Lyngi, son of King Hunding, and he also is a-wooing the daughter of King Eylimi.

Now the king deemed he knew that the twain had come thither but for one errand, and thought withal that war and trouble might be looked for from the hands of him who brought not his end about; so he spake to his daughter, and said—

"Thou art a wise woman, and I have spoken it, that thou alone shalt choose a husband for thyself; choose therefore between these two kings, and my rede shall be even as thine."

"A hard and troublous matter," says she; "yet will I choose him who is of greatest fame, King Sigmund to wit, albeit he is well stricken in years."

So to him was she betrothed, and King Lyngi gat him gone. Then was Sigmund wedded to Hjordis, and now each day was the feast better and more glorious than on the day before it. But thereafter Sigmund went back home to Hunland, and King Eylimi, his father-in-law, with him, and King Sigmund betakes himself to the due ruling of his realm.

But King Lyngi and his brethren gather an army together to fall on Sigmund, for as in all matters they were wont to have the worser lot, so did this bite the sorest of

all; and they would fain prevail over the might and pride of the Volsungs. So they came to Hunland, and sent King Sigmund word how that they would not steal upon him, and that they deemed he would scarce slink away from them. So Sigmund said he would come and meet them in battle, and drew his power together; but Hjordis was borne into the wood with a certain bondmaid, and mighty wealth went with them; and there she abode the while they fought.

Now the vikings rushed from their ships in numbers not to be borne up against, but Sigmund the King, and Eylimi, set up their banners, and the horns blew up to battle; but King Sigmund let blow the horn his father erst had had, and cheered on his men to the fight, but his army was far the fewest.

Now was that battle fierce and fell, and though Sigmund were old, yet most hardily he fought, and was ever the foremost of his men; no shield or byrny might hold against him, and he went ever through the ranks of his foemen on that day, and no man might see how things would fare between them; many an arrow and many a spear was aloft in air that day, and so his spae-wrights (spirits) wrought for him that he got no wound, and none can tell over the tale of those who fell before him, and both his arms were red with blood, even to the shoulders.

But now whenas the battle had dured a while, there came a man into the fight clad in a blue cloak, and with a slouched hat on his head, one-eyed he was,[1] and bare a

[1]Odin coming to change the ownership of the sword he had given Sigmund.

bill in his hand; and he came against Sigmund the King, and have up his bill against him, and as Sigmund smote fiercely with the sword it fell upon the bill and burst asunder in the midst: thenceforth the slaughter and dismay turned to his side, for the good-hap of King Sigmund had departed from him, and his men fell fast about him; naught did the king spare himself, but the rather cheered on his men; but even as the saw says, *No might 'gainst many,* so was it now proven; and in this fight fell Sigmund the King, and King Eylimi, his father-in-law, in the fore-front of their battle, and therewith the more part of their folk.

12.—OF THE SHARDS (PIECES) OF THE SWORD GRAM, AND HOW HJORDIS WENT TO KING ALF.

Now King Lyngi made for the king's abode, and was minded to take the king's daughter there, but failed herein, for there he found neither wife nor wealth: so he fared through all the realm, and gave his men rule thereover, and now deemed that he had slain all the kin of the Volsungs, and that he need dread them no more from henceforth.

Now Hjordis went amidst the slain that night of the battle, and came whereas lay King Sigmund, and asked if he might be healed; but he answered—

"Many a man lives after hope has grown little; but my good-hap has departed from me, nor will I suffer myself to be healed, nor wills Odin that I should ever draw sword again, since this my sword and his is broken; lo now, I have waged war while it was his will."

"Naught ill would I deem matters," said she, "if thou mightest be healed and avenge my father."

The king said, "That is fated for another man; behold now, thou are great with a man-child; nourish him well and with good heed, and the child shall be the noblest and most famed of all our kin: and keep well withal the shards of the sword: thereof shall a goodly sword be made, and it shall be called Gram, and our son shall bear it, and shall work many a great work therewith, even such as eld shall never minish; for his name shall abide and flourish as long as the world shall endure: and let this be enow for thee. But now I grow weary with my wounds, and I will go see our kin that have gone before me."

So Hjordis sat over him till he died at the day-dawning; and then she looked, and behold, there came many ships sailing to the land: then she spake to the handmaid—

"Let us now change raiment, and be thou called by my name, and say that thou are the king's daughter."

And thus they did; but now the vikings behold the great slaughter of men there, and see where two women fare away thence into the wood; and they deem that some great tidings must have befallen, and they leaped ashore from out their ships. Now the captain of these folk was Alf, son of Hjalprek, king of Denmark, who was sailing with his power along the land. So they came into the field among the slain, and saw how many men lay dead there; then the king bade go seek for the women and bring them thither, and they did so. He asked them what women they were; and, little as the thing seems like to be,

the bondmaid answered for the twain, telling of the fall of King Sigmund and King Eylimi, and many another great man, and who they were withal who had wrought the deed. Then the king asks if they wotted where the wealth of the king was bestowed; and then says the bondmaid—

"It may well be deemed that we know full surely thereof."

And therewith she guides them to the place where the treasure lay: and there they found exceeding great wealth; so that men deem they have never seen so many things of price heaped up together in one place. All this they bore to the ships of King Alf, and Hjordis and the bondmaid went with them. Therewith these sail away to their own realm, and talk how that surely on that field had fallen the most renowned of kings.

So the king sits by the tiller, but the women abide in the forecastle; but talk he had with the women and held their counsels of much account.

In such wise the king came home to his realm with great wealth, and he himself was a man exceeding goodly to look on. But when he had been but a little while at home, the queen, his mother, asked him why the fairest of the two women had the fewer rings and the less worthy attire.

"I deem," she said, "that she whom ye have held of least account is the nobler of the twain."

He answered: "I too have misdoubted me, that she is little like a bondwoman, and when we first met, in seemly wise she greeted noble men. Lo, now, we will make a trial of the thing."

So on a time as men sat at the drink, the king sat down to talk with the women, and said—

"In what wise do ye note the wearing of the hours, whenas night grows old, if ye may not see the lights of heaven?"

Then says the bondwoman, "This sign have I, that whenas in my youth I was wont to drink much in the dawn, so now when I no longer use that manner, I am yet wont to wake at that very same tide, and by that token do I know thereof."

Then the king laughed and said, "Ill manners for a king's daughter!" And therewith he turned to Hjordis, and asked her even the same question; but she answered—

"My father erst gave me a little gold ring of such nature that it groweth cold on my finger in the day-dawning; and that is the sign that I have to know thereof."

The king answered: "Enow of gold there, where a very bondmaid bore it! but come now, thou hast been long enow hid from me; yet if thou hadst told me all from the beginning, I would have done to thee as though we had both been one king's children: but better than thy deeds will I deal with thee, for thou shalt be my wife, and due jointure will I pay thee whenas thou hast borne me a child."

She spake therewith and told out the whole truth about herself: so there was she held in great honour, and deemed the worthiest of women.

13.—OF THE BIRTH AND WAXING OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

THE tale tells that Hjordis brought forth a man-child,

who was straightly borne before King Hjalprek, and then was the king glad thereof, when he saw the keen eyes in the head of him, and he said that few men would be equal to him or like unto him in any wise. So he was sprinkled with water, and had to name Sigurd, of whom all men speak with one speech and say that none was ever his like for growth and goodliness. He was brought up in the house of King Hjalprek in great love and honour; and so it is, that whenso all the noblest men and greatest kings are named in the olden tales, Sigurd is ever put before them all, for might and prowess, for high mind and stout heart, wherewith he was far more abundantly gifted than any man of the northern parts of the wide world.

So Sigurd waxed in King Hjalprek's house, and there was no child but loved him; through him was Hjordis betrothed to King Alf, and jointure meted to her.

Now Sigurd's foster-father was hight Regin, the son of Hreidmar; he taught him all manner of arts, the chess play, and the lore of runes, and the talking of many tongues, even as the wont was with kings' sons in those days. But on a day when they were together, Regin asked Sigurd, if he knew how much wealth his father had owned, and who had the ward thereof; Sigurd answered, and said that the kings kept the ward thereof.

Said Regin, "Dost thou trust them all utterly?"

Sigurd said, "It is seemly that they keep it till I may do somewhat therewith, for better they wot how to guard it than I do."

Another time came Regin to talk to Sigurd, and said—

"A marvellous thing truly that thou must needs be a

horse-boy to the kings, and go about like a running knave."

"Nay," said Sigurd, "it is not so, for in all things I have my will, and whatso thing I desire is granted me with good will."

"Well, then," said Regin, "ask for a horse of them."

"Yea," quoth Sigurd, "and that shall I have, whenso I have need thereof."

Thereafter Sigurd went to the king, and the king said—

"What wilt thou have of us?"

Then said Sigurd, "I would even a horse of thee for my disport."

Then said the king, "Choose for thyself a horse, and whatso thing else thou desirest among my matters."

So the next day went Sigurd to the wood, and met on the way an old man, long-bearded, that he knew not, who asked him whither away.

Sigurd said, "I am minded to choose me a horse; come thou, and counsel me thereon."

"Well then," said he, "go we and drive them to the river which is called Busil-tarn."

They did so, and drave the horses down into the deeps of the river, and all swam back to land but one horse; and that horse Sigurd chose for himself; grey he was of hue, and young of years, great of growth, and fair to look on, nor had any man yet crossed his back.

Then spake the grey-beard, "From Sleipnir's kin is this horse come, and he must be nourished heedfully, for it will be the best of all horses;" and therewithal he vanished away.

So Sigurd called the horse Grani, the best of all the horses of the world; nor was the man he met other than Odin himself.

Now yet again spake Regin to Sigurd, and said—

"Not enough is thy wealth, and I grieve right sore that thou must needs run here and there like a churl's son; but I can tell thee where there is much wealth for the winning, and great name and honour to be won in the getting of it."

Sigurd asked where that might be, and who had watch and ward over it.

Regin answered, "Fafnir is his name, and but a little way hence he lies, on the waste of Gnita-heath; and when thou comest there thou mayst well say that thou hast never seen more gold heaped together in one place, and that none might desire more treasure, though he were the most ancient and famed of all kings."

"Young am I," says Sigurd, "yet know I the fashion of this worm, and how that none durst go against him, so huge and evil is he."

Regin said, "Nay it is not so, the fashion and the growth of him is even as of other lingworms,[1] and an over great tale men make of it; and even so would thy forefathers have deemed; but thou, though thou be of the kin of the Volsungs, shalt scarce have the heart and mind of those, who are told of as the first in all deeds of fame."

Sigurd said, "Yea, belike I have little of their hardihood and prowess, but thou hast naught to do, to lay a coward's name upon me, when I am scarce out of my

[1]Lingworm—longworm, dragon.

childish years. Why dost thou egg me on hereto so busily?"

Regin said, "Therein lies a tale which I must needs tell thee."

"Let me hear the same," said Sigurd.

14.—REGIN'S TALE OF HIS BROTHERS, AND OF THE GOLD CALLED ANDVARI'S HOARD.

"THUS the tale begins," said Regin. "Hreidmar was my father's name, a mighty man and a wealthy: and his first son was named Fafnir, his second Otter, and I was the third, and the least of them all both of prowess and good conditions, but I was cunning to work in iron, and silver and gold, whereof I could make matters that availed somewhat. Other skill my brother Otter followed, and had another nature withal, for he was a great fisher, and above other men herein; in that he had the likeness of an otter by day, and dwelt ever in the river, and bare fish to bank in his mouth, and his prey would he ever bring to our father, and that availed him much; for the most part he kept him in his otter-gear, and then he would come home, and eat alone, and slumbering, for on the dry land he might see naught. But Fafnir was by far the greatest and grimmest, and would have all things about called his.

"Now," says Regin, "there was a dwarf called Andvari, who ever abode in that force,[1] which was called Andvari's force, in the likeness of a pike, and got meat for himself, for many fish there were in the force; now Otter, my brother, was ever wont to enter into the force, and bring

[1]Waterfall (Ice. *foss, fors*).

fish aland, and lay them one by one on the bank. And so it befell that Odin, Loki, and Hœnir, as they went their ways, came to Andvari's force, and Otter had taken a salmon, and ate it slumbering upon the river bank; then Loki took a stone and cast it at Otter, so that he gat his death thereby; the gods were well content with their prey, and fell to flaying off the otter's skin; and in the evening they came to Hreidmar's house, and showed him what they had taken: thereupon he laid hands on them, and doomed them to such ransom, as that they should fill the otter skin with gold, and cover it over without with red gold; so they sent Loki to gather gold together for them; he came to Ran,[1] and got her net, and went therewith to Andvari's force, and cast the net before the pike, and the pike ran into the net and was taken. Then said Loki—

"'What fish of all fishes,
Swims strong in the flood,
But hath learnt little wit to beware?
Thine head must thou buy,
From abiding in hell,
And find me the wan waters flame.'

He answered—

"'Andvari folk call me,
Call Oinn my father,
Over many a force have I fared;
For a Norn of ill-luck,
This life on me lay
Through wet ways ever to wade.'

[1]Ran is the goddess of the sea, wife of Ægir. The otter was held sacred by Norsefolk and figures in the myth and legend of most races besides; to this day its killing is held a great crime by the Parsees (Haug. *Religion of the Parsees*, page 212). Compare penalty above with that for killing the Welsh king's cat (*Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*).

"So Loki beheld the gold of Andvari, and when he had given up the gold, he had but one ring left, and that also Loki took from him; then the dwarf went into a hollow of the rocks, and cried out, that that gold-ring, yea and all the gold withal, should be the bane of every man who should own it thereafter.

"Now the gods rode with the treasure to Hreidmar, and fulfilled the otter-skin, and set it on its feet, and they must cover it over utterly with gold: but when this was done then Hreidmar came forth, and beheld yet one of the muzzle hairs, and bade them cover that withal; then Odin drew the ring, Andvari's loom, from his hand, and covered up the hair therewith; then sang Loki—

"'Gold enow, gold enow,
A great weregild, thou hast,
That my head in good hap I may hold;
But thou and thy son
Are naught fated to thrive,
The bane shall it be of you both.'

"Thereafter," says Regin, "Fafnir slew his father and murdered him, nor got I aught of the treasure, and so evil he grew, that he fell to lying abroad, and begrudged any share in the wealth to any man, and so became the worst of all worms, and ever now lies brooding upon that treasure: but for me, I went to the king and became his master-smith; and thus is the tale told of how I lost the heritage of my father, and the weregild for my brother."

So spake Regin; but since that time gold is called Ottergild, and for no other cause than this.

But Sigurd answered, "Much hast thou lost, and ex-

ceeding evil have thy kinsmen been! but now, make a sword by thy craft, such a sword as that none can be made like unto it; so that I may do great deeds therewith, if my heart avail thereto, and thou wouldst have me slay this mighty dragon."

Regin says, "Trust me well herein; and with that same sword shalt thou slay Fafnir."

15.—OF THE WELDING TOGETHER OF THE SHARDS OF THE SWORD GRAM.

So REGIN makes a sword, and gives it into Sigurd's hands. He took the sword, and said—

"Behold thy smithying, Regin!" and therewith smote it into the anvil, and the sword brake; so he cast down the brand, and bade him forge a better.

Then Regin forged another sword, and brought it to Sigurd, who looked thereon.

Then said Regin, "Belike thou art well content therewith, hard master though thou be in smithying."

So Sigurd proved the sword, and brake it even as the first; then he said to Regin—

"Ah, art thou, mayhappen, a traitor and a liar like to those former kin of thine?"

Therewith he went to his mother, and she welcomed him in seemly wise, and they talked and drank together.

Then spake Sigurd, "Have I heard aright, that King Sigmund gave thee the good sword Gram in two pieces?"

"True enough," she said.

So Sigurd said, "Deliver them into my hands, for I would have them."

She said he looked like to win great fame, and gave him the sword. Therewith went Sigurd to Regin, and bade him make a good sword thereof as he best might; Regin grew wroth thereat, but went into the smithy with the pieces of the sword, thinking well meanwhile that Sigurd pushed his head far enow into the matter of smithying. So he made a sword, and as he bore it forth from the forge, it seemed to the smiths as though fire burned along the edges thereof. Now he bade Sigurd take the sword, and said he knew not how to make a sword if this one failed. Then Sigurd smote it into the anvil, and cleft it down to the stock thereof, and neither burst the sword nor brake it. Then he praised the sword much, and thereafter went to the river with a lock of wool, and threw it up against the stream, and it fell asunder when it met the sword. Then was Sigurd glad, and went home.

But Regin said, "Now whereas I have made the sword for thee, belike thou wilt hold to thy troth given, and wilt go meet Fafnir?"

"Surely will I hold thereto," said Sigurd, "yet first must I avenge my father."

Now Sigurd the older he grew, the more he grew in the love of all men, so that every child loved him well.

16.—THE PROPHECY OF GRIFIR.

THERE was a man hight Grifir (Gripir), who was Sigurd's mother's brother, and a little after the forging of the sword Sigurd went to Grifir, because he was a man who knew things to come, and what was fated to men: of

him Sigurd asked diligently how his life should go; but Grifir was long or he spake, yet at the last, by reason of Sigurd's exceeding great prayers, he told him all his life and the fate thereof, even as afterwards came to pass. So when Grifir had told him all even as he would, he went back home; and a little after he and Regin met.

Then said Regin, "Go thou and slay Fafnir, even as thou hast given thy word."

Sigurd said, "That work shall be wrought; but another is first to be done, the avenging of Sigmund the king and the other of my kinsmen who fell in that their last fight."

17.—OF SIGURD'S AVENGING OF SIGMUND HIS FATHER.

Now Sigurd went to the kings, and spake thus—

"Here have I abode a space with you, and I owe you thanks and reward, for great love and many gifts and all due honour; but now will I away from the land and go meet the sons of Hunding, and do them to wit that the Volsungs are not all dead; and your might would I have to strengthen me therein."

So the kings said they would give him all things soever that he desired, and therewith was a great army got ready, and all things wrought in the most heedful wise, ships and all war-gear, so that his journey might be of the stateliest: but Sigurd himself steered the dragon-keel which was the greatest and noblest; richly wrought were their sails, and glorious to look on.

So they sail and have wind at will; but when a few days were overpast, there arose a great storm on the sea, and the waves were to behold even as the foam of men's

blood; but Sigurd bade take in no sail, howsoever they might be riven, but rather to lay on higher than heretofore. But as they sailed past the rocks of a ness, a certain man hailed the ships, and asked who was captain over that navy; then was it told him that the chief and lord was Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, the most famed of all the young men who now are.

Then said the man, "Naught but one thing, certes, do all say of him, that none among the sons of kings may be likened unto him; now fain were I that ye would shorten sail on some of the ships, and take me aboard."

Then they asked him of his name, and he sang—

Hnikar I hight,
When gladdened Huginn,
And went to battle,
Bright son of Volsung;
Now may ye call
The carl on the cliff top,
Feng or Fjolnir:
Fain would I with you.

They made for land therewith, and took that man aboard.

Then the storm abated, and on they fared till they came aland in the realm of Hunding's sons, and then Fjolnir vanished away.

Then they let loose fire and sword, and slew men and burnt their abodes, and did waste all before them: a great company of folk fled before the face of them to Lyngi the King, and tell him that men of war are in the land, and are faring with such rage and fury that the like has never been heard of; and that the sons of King Hunding had no great forecast in that they said they would never fear

the Volsungs more, for here was come Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, as captain over this army.

So King Lyngi let send the war-message all throughout his realm, and has no will to flee, but summons to him all such as would give him aid. So he came against Sigurd with a great army, he and his brothers with him, and an exceeding fierce fight befell; many a spear and many an arrow might men see there raised aloft, axes hard driven, shields cleft and byrnies torn, helmets were shivered, skulls split atwain, and many a man felled to the cold earth.

And now when the fight has long dured in such wise, Sigurd goes forth before the banners, and has the good sword Gram in his hand, and smites down both men and horses, and goes through the thickest of the throng with both arms red with blood to the shoulder; and folk shrank aback before him wheresoever he went, nor would either helm or byrny hold before him, and no man deemed he had ever seen his like. So a long while the battle lasted, and many a man was slain, and furious was the onset; till at last it befell, even as seldom comes to hand, when a land army falls on, that, do whatso they might, naught was brought about; but so many men fell of the sons of Hunding that the tale of them may not be told; and now whenas Sigurd was among the foremost, came the sons of Hunding against him, and Sigurd smote therewith at Lyngi the king, and clave him down, both helm and head, and mail-clad body, and thereafter he smote Hjorward his brother atwain, and then slew all the other sons of Hunding who were yet alive, and the more part of their folk withal.

Now home goes Sigurd with fair victory won, and plenteous wealth and great honour, which he had gotten to him in this journey, and feasts were made for him against he came back to the realm.

But when Sigurd had been at home but a little, came Regin to talk with him, and said—

"Belike thou wilt now have good will to bow down Fafnir's crest according to thy word plighted, since thou hast thus revenged thy father and the others of thy kin."

Sigurd answered, "That will we hold to, even as we have promised, nor did it ever fall from our memory."

18.—OF THE SLAYING OF THE WORM FAFNIR.

Now Sigurd and Regin ride up the heath along that same way wherein Fafnir was wont to creep when he fared to the water; and folk say that thirty fathoms was the height of that cliff along which he lay when he drank of the water below. Then Sigurd spake:

"How sayedst thou, Regin, that this dragon was no greater than other lingworms; methinks the track of him is marvellous great?"

Then said Regin, "Make thee a hole, and sit down therein, and whenas the worm comes to the water, smite him into the heart, and so do him to death, and win for thee great fame thereby."

But Sigurd said, "What will betide me if I be before the blood of the worm?"

Says Regin, "Of what avail to counsel thee if thou art still afraid of everything? Little are thou like thy kin in stoutness of heart."

Then Sigurd rides right over the heath; but Regin gets him gone, sore afraid.

But Sigurd fell to digging him a pit, and whiles he was at that work, there came to him an old man with a long beard, and asked what he wrought there, and he told him.

Then answered the old man and said, "Thou doest after sorry counsel: rather dig thee many pits, and let the blood run therein; but sit thee down in one thereof, and so thrust the worm's heart through."

And therewithal he vanished away; but Sigurd made the pits even as it was shown to him.

Now crept the worm down to his place of watering, and the earth shook all about him, and he snorted forth fire and venom on all the way before him as he went; but Sigurd neither trembled nor was afraid at the roaring of him. So whenas the worm crept over the pits, Sigurd thrust his sword under his left shoulder, so that it sank in up to the hilt; then up leapt Sigurd from the pit and drew the sword back again unto him, and therewith was his arm all bloody, up to the very shoulder.

Now when that mighty worm was ware that he had his death-wound, then he lashed out head and tail, so that all things soever that were before him were broken to pieces.

So whenas Fafnir had his death-wound, he asked "Who art thou? and who is thy father? and what thy kin, that thou wert so hardy as to bear weapons against me?"

Sigurd answered, "Unknown to men is my kin. I am called a noble beast: neither father have I nor mother, and all alone have I fared hither."

Said Fafnir, "Whereas thou has neither father nor

mother, of what wonder wert thou born then? But now, though thou tellest me not thy name on this my death-day, yet thou knowest verily that thou liest unto me."

He answered, "Sigurd am I called, and my father was Sigmund."

Says Fafnir, "Who egged thee on to this deed, and why wouldst thou be driven to it? Hadst thou never heard how that all folk were afraid of me, and of the awe of my countenance? But an eager father thou hadst, O bright-eyed swain!"

Sigurd answered, "A hardy heart urged me on hereto; and a strong hand and this sharp sword, which well thou knowest now, stood me in stead in the doing of the deed; *Seldom hath hardy eld a faint-heart youth.*"

Fafnir said, "Well, I wot that hadst thou waxed amid thy kin, thou mightest have good skill to slay folk in thine anger; but more of a marvel is it, that thou, a bondsman taken in war, shouldst have the heart to set on me, *for few among bondsmen have heart for the fight.*"

Said Sigurd, "Wilt thou then cast it in my teeth that I am far away from my kin? Albeit I was a bondsman, yet was I never shackled. God wot thou hast found me free enow."

Fafnir answered, "In angry wise dost thou take my speech; but hearken, for that same gold which I have owned shall be thy bane too."

Quoth Sigurd, "Fain would we keep all our wealth till that day of days; yet shall each man die once for all."

Said Fafnir, "Few things wilt thou do after my counsel; but take heed that thou shalt be drowned if thou

farest unwarily over the sea; so abide thou rather on the dry land, for the coming of the calm tide."

Then said Sigurd, "Speak, Fafnir, and say, if thou art so exceeding wise, who are the Norns who rule the lot of all mothers' sons."

Fafnir answers, "Many there be and wide apart; for some are the kin of the Æsir, and some are of Elfin kin, and some there are who are daughters of Dvalin."

Said Sigurd, "How namest thou the holm whereon Surt[1] and the Æsir mix and mingle the water of the sword?"

"Unshapen is that holm hight," said Fafnir.

And yet again he said, "Regin, my brother, has brought about my end, and it gladdens my heart that thine too he bringeth about; for thus will things be according to his will."

And once again he spake, "A countenance of terror I bore up before all folk, after that I brooded over the heritage of my brother, and on every side did I spout out poison, so that none durst come anigh me, and of no weapon was I afraid, nor ever had I so many men before me, as that I deemed myself not stronger than all; for all men were sore afraid of me."

Sigurd answered and said, "Few may have victory by means of that same countenance of terror, for whoso comes amongst many shall one day find that no one man is by so far the mightiest of all."

Then says Fafnir, "Such counsel I give thee, that thou take thy horse and ride away at thy speediest, for ofttimes

[1]Surt; a fire-giant, who will destroy the world at the Ragnarok, or destruction of all things. Æsir; the gods.

it falls out so, that he who gets a death-wound avenges himself none the less."

Sigurd answered, "Such as thy redes are I will nowise do after them; nay, I will ride now to thy lair and take to me that great treasure of thy kin."

"Ride there then," said Fafnir, "and thou shalt find gold enow to suffice thee for all thy life-days; yet shall that gold be thy bane, and the bane of every one soever who owns it."

Then up stood Sigurd, and said, "Home would I ride and lose all that wealth, if I deemed that by the losing thereof I should never die; but every brave and true man will fain have his hand on wealth till that last day; but thou, Fafnir, wallow in the death-pain till Death and Hell have thee."

And therewithal Fafnir died.

19.—OF THE SLAYING OF REGIN, SON OF HREIDMAR.

THEREAFTER came Regin to Sigurd, and said, "Hail, lord and master, a noble victory hast thou won in the slaying of Fafnir, whereas none durst heretofore abide in the path of him; and now shall this deed of fame be of renown while the world stands fast."

Then stood Regin staring on the earth a long while, and presently thereafter spake from heavy mood: "Mine own brother hast thou slain, and scarce may I be called sackless of the deed."

Then Sigurd took his sword Gram and dried it on the earth, and spake to Regin—

"Afar thou faredst when I wrought this deed and tried

this sharp sword with the hand and the might of me; with all the might and main of a dragon must I strive, while thou wert laid alow in the heather-bush, wotting not if it were earth or heaven."

Said Regin, "Long might this worm have lain in his lair, if the sharp sword I forged with my hand had not been good at need to thee; had that not been, neither thou nor any man would have prevailed against him as at this time."

Sigurd answers, "Whenas men meet foes in fight, better is stout heart than sharp sword."

Then said Regin, exceeding heavily, "Thou hast slain my brother, and scarce may I be sackless of the deed."

Therewith Sigurd cut out the heart of the worm with the sword called Ridil; but Regin drank of Fafnir's blood, and spake, "Grant me a boon, and do a thing little for thee to do. Bear the heart to the fire, and roast it, and give me thereof to eat."

Then Sigurd went his ways and roasted it on a rod; and when the blood bubbled out he laid his finger thereon to essay it, if it were fully done; and then he set his finger in his mouth, and lo, when the heart-blood of the worm touched his tongue, straightway he knew the voice of all fowls, and heard withal how the wood-peckers chattered in the brake beside him—

"There sittest thou, Sigurd, roasting Fafnir's heart for another, that thou shouldest eat thine ownself, and then thou shouldest become the wisest of all men."

And another spake: "There lies Regin, minded to beguile the man who trusts in him."

But yet again said the third, "Let him smite the head from off him then, and be only lord of all that gold."

And once more the fourth spake and said, "Ah, the wiser were he if he followed after that good counsel, and rode thereafter to Fafnir's lair, and took to him that mighty treasure that lieth there, and then rode over Hindfell, whereas sleeps Brynhild; for there would he get great wisdom. Ah, wise he were, if he did after your redes, and bethought him of his own weal; *for where wolf's ears are, wolf's teeth are near.*"

Then cried the fifth: "Yea, yea, not so wise is he as I deem him, if he spareth him, whose brother he hath slain already."

At last spake the sixth: "Handy and good rede to slay him, and be lord of the treasure!"

Then said Sigurd, "The time is unborn wherein Regin shall be my bane; nay, rather one road shall both these brothers fare."

And therewith he drew his sword Gram and struck off Regin's head.

Then heard Sigurd the wood-peckers a-singing, even as the song says.

Then Sigurd ate some deal of Fafnir's heart, and the remnant he kept. Then he leapt on his horse and rode along the trail of the worm Fafnir, and so right unto his abiding-place; and he found it open, and beheld all the doors and the gear of them that they were wrought of iron; yea, and all the beams of the house; and it was dug down deep into the earth: there found Sigurd gold exceeding plenteous, and the sword Rotti; and thence he

took the Helm of Awe, and the Gold Byrny, and many things fair and good. So much gold he found there, that he thought verily that scarce might two horses, or three belike, bear it thence. So he took all the gold and laid it in two great chests, and set them on the horse Grani, and took the reins of him, but nowise will he stir, neither will he abide smiting. Then Sigurd knows the mind of the horse, and leaps on the back of him, and smites and spurs into him, and off the horse goes even as if he were unladen.

20.—OF SIGURD'S MEETING WITH BRYNHILD ON THE MOUNTAIN.

By long roads rides Sigurd, till he comes at the last up on to Hindfell, and wends his way south to the land of the Franks; and he sees before him on the fell a great light, as of fire burning, and flaming up even unto the heavens; and when he came thereto, lo, a shield-hung castle before him, and a banner on the topmost thereof: into the castle went Sigurd, and saw one lying there asleep, and all-armed. Therewith he takes the helm from off the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman; and she was clad in a byrny as closely set on her as though it had grown to her flesh; so he rent it from the collar downwards; and then the sleeves thereof, and ever the sword bit on it as if it were cloth. Then said Sigurd that over-long had she lain asleep; but she asked—

"What thing of great might is it that has prevailed to rend my byrny, and draw me from my sleep?"

"Ah, is it so, that here is come Sigurd Sigmundson, bearing Fafnir's helm on his head and Fafnir's bane in his hand?"

"Of the Volsung's kin is he who has done the deed; but now I have heard that thou art daughter of a mighty king, and folk have told us that thou wert lovely and full of lore, and now I will try the same."

Then Brynhild sang—

"Long have I slept
And slumbered long,
Many and long are the woes of mankind,
By the might of Odin
Must I bide helpless
To shake from off me the spells of slumber.

Hail to the day come back!
Hail, sons of the daylight!
Hail to thee, dark night, and thy daughter!
Look with kind eyes adown,
On us sitting here lonely,
And give unto us the gain that we long for.

Hail to the Æsir,
And the sweet Asyniur![1]
Hail to the fair earth fulfilled of plenty!
Fair words, wise hearts,
Would we win from you,
And healing hands while life we hold."

Then Brynhild speaks again and says, "Two kings fought, one hight Helm Gunnar, an old man, and the greatest of warriors, and Odin had promised the victory unto him; but his foe was Agnar, or Aud's brother; and so I smote down Helm Gunnar in the fight; and

[1]Goddesses.

Odin, in vengeance for that deed, stuck the sleep-thorn into me, and said that I would never again have the victory, but should be given away in marriage; but thereagainst I vowed a vow, that never would I wed one who knew the name of fear."

Then said Sigurd, "Teach us the lore of mighty matters!"

She said, "Belike thou cannest more skill in all than I; yet will I teach thee; yea, and with thanks, if there be aught of my cunning that will in anywise pleasure thee, either of runes or of other matters that are the root of things; but now let us drink together, and may the Gods give to us twain a good day, that thou mayst win good help and fame from my wisdom, and that thou mayst hereafter mind thee of that which we twain speak together."

Then Brynhild filled a beaker and bore it to Sigurd, and gave him the drink of love, and spake—

"Beer bring I to thee,
Fair fruit of the byrnies' clash,
Mixed is it mightily,
Mingled with fame,
Brimming with bright lays
And pitiful runes,
Wise words, sweet words,
Speech of great game.

Runes of war know thou,
If great thou wilt be!
Cut them on hilt of hardened sword,
Some on the brand's back,
Some on its shining side,
Twice name Tyr therein.

Sea-runes good at need,
Learnt for ship's saving,
For the good health of the swimming horse;
On the stern cut them,
Cut them on the rudder-blade
And set flame to shaven oar:
Howso big be the sea-hills,
Howso blue beneath,
Hail from the main then comest thou home.

Word-runes learn well
If thou wilt that no man
Pay back grief for the grief thou gavest;
Wind thou these,
Weave thou these,
Cast thou these all about thee,
At the Thing,
Where folk throng,
Unto the full doom faring.

Of ale-runes know the wisdom
If thou wilt that another's wife
Should not bewray thine heart that trusteth:
Cut them on the mead-horn,
On the back of each hand,
And nick an N upon thy nail.

Ale have thou heed
To sign from all harm
Leek lay thou in the liquor,
Then I know for sure
Never cometh to thee,
Mead with hurtful matters mingled.

Help-runes shalt thou gather
If skill thou wouldst gain
To loosen child from low-laid mother;
Cut be they in hands hollow,
Wrapped the joints round about;
Call for the Good-folks' gainsome helping

Learn the bough-runes wisdom
If leech-lore thou lovest;
And wilt wot about wounds' searching
On the bark be they scored;
On the buds of trees
Whose boughs look eastward ever.

Thought-runes shalt thou deal with
If thou wilt be of all men
Fairest-souled wight, and wisest,
These areded
These first cut
These first took to heart high Hropt.

On the shield were they scored
That stands before the shining God,
On Early-waking's ear,
On All-knowing's hoof,
On the wheel which runneth
Under Rognir's chariot;
On Sleipnir's jaw-teeth,
On the sleigh's traces.

On the rough bear's paws,
And on Bragi's tongue,
On the wolf's claws,
And on eagle's bill,
On bloody wings,
And bridge's end;
On loosing palms,
And pity's path:

On glass, and on gold,
And on goodly silver,
In wine and in wort,
And the seat of the witch-wife;
On Gungnir's point,
And Grani's bosom;
On the Norn's nail,
And the neb of the night-owl.

All these so cut,
Were shaven and sheared,
And mingled in with holy mead,
And sent upon wide ways enow;
Some abide with the Elves,
Some abide with the Æsir,
Or with the wise Vanir,
Some still hold the sons of mankind.

These be the book-runes,
And the runes of good help,
And all the ale-runes,
And the runes of much might;
To whomso they may avail,
Unbewildered unspoilt;
They are wholesome to have:
Thrive thou with these then.
When thou hast learnt their lore,
Till the Gods end thy life-days.

Now shalt thou choose thee
E'en as choice is bidden,
Sharp steel's root and stem,
Choose song or silence;
See to each in thy heart,
All hurt has been heeded."

Then answered Sigurd—

"Ne'er shall I flee,
Though thou wottest me fey;
Never was I born for blenching,
Thy loved rede will I
Hold aright in my heart
Even as long as I may live."

21.—MORE WISE WORDS OF BRYNHILD.

SIGURD spake now, "Sure no wiser woman than thou

art one may be found in the wide world; yea, yea, teach me more yet of thy wisdom!"

She answers, "Seemly is it that I do according to thy will, and show thee forth more redes of great avail, for thy prayer's sake and thy wisdom;" and she spake withal—

"Be kindly to friend and kin, and reward not their trespasses against thee; bear and forbear, and win for thee thereby long enduring praise of men.

"Take good heed of evil things: a may's (maid's) love, and a man's wife; full oft thereof doth ill befall!

"Let not thy mind be overmuch crossed by unwise men at thronged meetings of folk; for oft these speak worse than they wot of; lest thou be called a dastard, and art minded to think that thou art even as is said; slay such an one on another day, and so reward his ugly talk.

"If thou farest by the way whereas bide evil things, be well aware of thyself; take not harbour near the highway, though thou be benighted, for oft abide there ill wights for men's bewilderment.

"Let not fair women beguile thee, such as thou mayst meet at the feast, so that the thought thereof stand thee in stead of sleep, and a quiet mind; yea, draw them not to thee with kisses or other sweet things of love.

"If thou hearest the fool's word of a drunken man, strive not with him being drunk with drink and witless; many a grief, yea, and the very death, groweth from out such things.

"Fight thy foes in the field, nor be burnt in thine house.

"Never swear thou wrongsome oath; great and grim is the reward for the breaking of plighted troth.

"Give kind heed to dead men,—sick-dead, sea-dead, or sword-dead; deal heedfully with their dead corpses.

"Trow never in him for whom thou hast slain father, brother, or whatso near kin, yea, though young he be; *for oft waxes wolf in youngling.*

"Look thou with good heed to the wiles of thy friends; but little skill is given to me, that I should foresee the ways of thy life; yet good it were that hate fell not on thee from those of thy wife's house."

Sigurd spake, "None among the sons of men can be found wiser than thou; and thereby swear I, that thee will I have as my own, for near to my heart thou liest."

She answers, "Thee would I fainest choose, though I had all men's sons to choose from."

And thereto they plighted troth both of them.

22.—OF THE SEMBLANCE AND ARRAY OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

Now Sigurd rides away; many-folded is his shield, and blazing with red gold, and the image of a dragon is drawn thereon; and this same was dark brown above, and bright red below; and with even such-like image was adorned helm, and saddle, and coat-armour; and he was clad in the golden byrny, and all his weapons were gold-wrought.

Now for this cause was the drake drawn on all his weapons, that when he was seen of men, all folk might know who went there; yea, all those who had heard of

his slaying of that great dragon, that the Vœrings call Fafnir; and for that cause are his weapons gold-wrought, and brown of hue, and that he was by far above other men in courtesy and goodly manners, and well-nigh in all things else; and whenas folk tell of all the mightiest champions, and the noblest chiefs, then ever is he named the foremost, and his name goes wide about on all tongues north of the sea of the Greek-lands, and even so shall it be while the world endures.

Now the hair of this Sigurd was golden-red of hue, fair of fashion, and falling down in great locks; thick and short was his beard, and of no other colour; high-nosed he was, broad and high-boned of face; so keen were his eyes, that few durst gaze up under the brows of him; his shoulders were as broad to look on as the shoulders of two; most duly was his body fashioned betwixt height and breadth, and in such wise as was seemliest; and this is the sign told of his height, that when he was girt with his sword Gram, which same was seven spans long, as he went through the full-grown rye-fields, the dew-shoe of the said sword smote the ears of the standing corn; and, for all that, greater was his strength than his growth; well could he wield sword, and cast forth spear, shoot shaft, and hold shield, bend bow, back horse, and do all the goodly deeds that he learned in his youth's days.

Wise he was to know things yet undone; and the voice of all fowls he knew, wherefore few things fell on him unawares.

Of many words he was, and so fair of speech withal, that whensoever he made it his business to speak, he never

left speaking before that to all men it seemed full sure, that no otherwise must the matter be than as he said.

His sport and pleasure was to give aid to his own folk, and to prove himself in mighty matters, to take wealth from his unfriends, and give the same to his friends.

Never did he lose heart, and of naught was he afraid.

23.—SIGURD COMES TO HLYMDALE.

FORTH Sigurd rides till he comes to a great and goodly dwelling, the lord whereof was a mighty chief called Heimir; he had to wife a sister of Brynhild, who was hight Bekkhild, because she had bidden at home, and learned handicraft, whereas Brynhild fared with helm and byrny unto the wars, wherefore was she called Brynhild.

Heimir and Bekkhild had a son called Alswid, the most courteous of men.

Now at this stead were men disporting them abroad, but when they see the man riding thereto, they leave their play to wonder at him, for none such had they ever seen erst; so they went to meet him, and gave him good welcome; Alswid bade him abide and have such things at his hands as he would; and he takes his bidding blithesomely; due service withal was established for him; four men bore the treasure of gold from off the horse, and the fifth took it to him to guard the same; therein were many things to behold, things of great price, and seldom seen; and great game and joy men had to look on byrnies and helms, and mighty rings, and wondrous great golden stoups, and all kinds of war weapons.

So there dwelt Sigurd long in great honour holden;

and tidings of that deed of fame spread wide through all lands, of how he had slain that hideous and fearful dragon. So good joyance had they there together, and each was leal (loyal) to other; and their sport was in the arraying of their weapons, and the shafting of their arrows, and the flying of their falcons.

24.—SIGURD SEES BRYNHILD AT HLYMDALE.

In those days came home to Heimir, Brynhild, his foster-daughter, and she sat in her bower with her maidens, and could more skill in handycraft than other women; she sat, overlaying cloth with gold, and sewing therein the great deeds which Sigurd had wrought, the slaying of the Worm, and the taking of the wealth of him, and the death of Regin withal.

Now tells the tale, that on a day Sigurd rode into the wood with hawk, and hound, and men thronging; and whenas he came home his hawk flew up to a high tower, and sat him down on a certain window. Then fared Sigurd after his hawk, and he saw where sat a fair woman, and knew that it was Brynhild, and he deems all things he sees there to be worthy together, both her fairness, and the fair things she wrought; and therewith he goes into the hall, but has no more joyance in the games of the men folk.

Then spake Alswid, "Why art thou so bare of bliss? this manner of thine grieveth us thy friends; why then wilt thou not hold to thy gleesome ways? Lo, thy hawks pine now, and thy horse Grani droops; and long will it be ere we are booted thereof?"

Sigurd answered, "Good friend, hearken to what lies on my mind; for my hawk flew up into a certain tower; and when I came thereto and took him, lo there I saw a fair woman, and she sat by a needlework of gold, and did thereon my deeds that are passed, and my deeds that are to come."

Then said Alswid, "Thou hast seen Brynhild, Budli's daughter, the greatest of great women."

"Yea, verily," said Sigurd; "but how came she hither?"

Alswid answered, "Short space there was betwixt the coming hither of the twain of you."

Says Sigurd, "Yea, but a few days agone I knew her for the best of the world's women."

Alswid said, "Give not all thine heed to one woman, being such a man as thou art; ill life to sit lamenting for what we may not have."

"I shall go meet her," says Sigurd, "and get from her love like my love, and give her a gold ring in token thereof."

Alswid answered, "None has ever yet been known whom she would let sit beside her, or to whom she would give drink; for ever will she hold to warfare and to the winning of all kinds of fame."

Sigurd said, "We know not for sure whether she will give us answer or not, or grant us a seat beside her."

So the next day after, Sigurd went to the bower, but Alswid stood outside the bower door, fitting shafts to his arrows.

Now Sigurd spake, "Abide, fair and hale lady,—how farest thou?"

She answered, "Well it fares; my kin and my friends live yet; but who shall say what goodhap folk may bear to their life's end?"

He sat him down by her, and there came in four damsels with great golden beakers, and the best of wine therein; and these stood before the twain.

Then said Brynhild, "This seat is for few, but and if my father come."

He answered, "Yet is it granted to one that likes me well."

Now that chamber was hung with the best and fairest hangings, and the floor thereof was all covered with cloth.

Sigurd spake, "Now has it come to pass even as thou didst promise."

"O be thou welcome here!" said she, and arose therewith, and the four damsels with her, and bore the golden beaker to him, and bade him drink; he stretched out his hand to the beaker, and took it, and her hand withal, and drew her down beside him; and cast his arms around about her neck and kissed her, and said—

"Thou art the fairest that was ever born!"

But Brynhild said, "Ah, wiser is it not to cast faith and troth into a woman's power, for ever shall they break that they have promised."

He said, "That day would dawn the best of days over our heads whereon each of each should be made happy."

Brynhild answered, "It is not fated that we should abide together; I am a shield-may, and wear helm on head even as the kings of war, and them full oft I help, neither is the battle become loathsome to me."

Sigurd answered, "What fruit shall be of our life, if we live not together; harder to bear this pain that lies hereunder, than the stroke of sharp sword."

Brynhild answers, "I shall gaze on the hosts of the war-kings, but thou shalt wed Gudrun, the daughter of Gjuki."

Sigurd answered, "What king's daughter lives to beguile me! neither am I double-hearted herein; and now I swear by the Gods that thee shall I have for mine own, or no woman else."

And even suchlike wise spake she.

Sigurd thanked her for her speech, and gave her a gold ring, and now they swore oath anew, and so he went his ways to his men, and is with them awhile in great bliss.

25.—OF THE DREAM OF GUDRUN, GJUKI'S DAUGHTER.

THERE was a king hight Gjuki, who ruled a realm south of the Rhine; three sons he had, thus named: Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm, and Gudrun was the name of his daughter, the fairest of maidens; and all these children were far before all other king's children in all prowess, and in goodliness and growth withal; ever were his sons at the wars and wrought many a deed of fame. But Gjuki had wedded Grimhild the Wise-wife.

Now Budli was the name of a king mightier than Gjuki, mighty though they both were; and Atli was the brother of Brynhild. Atli was a fierce man and a grim, great and black to look on, yet noble of mien withal, and the greatest of warriors. Grimhild was a fierce-hearted woman.

Now the days of the Gjukings bloomed fair, and chiefly because of those children, so far before the sons of men.

On a day Gudrun says to her maids that she may have no joy of heart; then a certain woman asked her wherefore her joy was departed.

She answered, "Grief came to me in my dreams, therefore is there sorrow in my heart, since thou must needs ask thereof."

"Tell it me, then, thy dream," said the woman, "for dreams oft forecast but the weather."

Gudrun answers, "Nay, nay, no weather is this; I dreamed that I had a fair hawk on my wrist, feathered with feathers of gold."

Says the woman, "Many have heard tell of thy beauty, thy wisdom, thy courtesy; some king's son abides thee, then."

Gudrun answers, "I dreamed that naught was so dear to me as this hawk, and all my wealth had I cast aside rather than him."

The woman said, "Well, then, the man thou shalt have will be of the goodliest, and well shalt thou love him."

Gudrun answered, "It grieves me that I know not who he shall be; let us go seek Brynhild, for she belike will wot thereof."

So they arrayed them in gold and many a fair thing, and she went with her damsels till they came to the hall of Brynhild, and that hall was dight with gold, and stood on a high hill; and whenas their goings were seen, it was told Brynhild, that a company of women drove toward the burg in gilded waggons.

"That shall be Gudrun, Gjuki's daughter," says she: "I dreamed of her last night; let us go meet her! no fairer woman may come to our house."

So they went abroad to meet them, and gave them good greeting, and they went into the goodly hall together; fairly painted it was within, and well adorned with silver vessel; cloths were spread under the feet of them, and all folk served them, and in many wise they sported.

But Gudrun was somewhat silent.

Then said Brynhild, "Ill to abash folk of their mirth; prithee do not so; let us talk together for our disport of mighty kings and their great deeds."

"Good talk," says Gudrun, "let us do even so; what kings deemest thou to have been the first of all men?"

Brynhild says, "The sons of Haki, and Hagbard withal; they brought to pass many a deed of fame in their warfare."

Gudrun answers, "Great men, certainly, and of noble fame! Yet Sigar took their one sister, and burned the other, house and all; and they may be called slow to revenge the deed; why didst thou not name my brethren, who are held to be the first of men as at this time?"

Brynhild says, "Men of good hope are they surely, though but little proven hitherto; but one I know far before them, Sigurd, the son of Sigmund the king; a youngling was he in the days when he slew the sons of Hunding, and revenged his father, and Eylimi, his mother's father."

Said Gudrun, "By what token tellest thou that?"

Brynhild answered, "His mother went amid the dead,

and found Sigmund the king sore wounded, and would bind up his hurts; but he said he grew over old for war, and bade her lay this comfort to her heart, that she should bear the most famed of sons; and wise was the wise man's word therein; for after the death of King Sigmund, she went to King Alf, and there was Sigurd nourished in great honour, and day by day he wrought some deed of fame, and is the man most renowned of all the wide world."

Gudrun says, "From love hast thou gained these tidings of him; but for this cause came I here, to tell thee dreams of mine which have brought me great grief."

Says Brynhild, "Let not such matters sadden thee; abide with thy friends who wish thee blithesome, all of them!"

"This I dreamed," said Gudrun, "that we went, a many of us in company, from the bower, and we saw an exceeding great hart, that far excelled all other deer ever seen, and the hair of him was golden; and this deer we were all fain to take, but I alone got him; and he seemed to me better than all things else; but sithence thou, Brynhild, didst shoot and slay my deer even at my very knees, and such grief was that to me that scarce might I bear it; and then afterwards thou gavest me a wolf-cub, which besprinkled me with the blood of my brethren."

Brynhild answers, "I will read thy dream, even as things shall come to pass hereafter; for Sigurd shall come to thee, even he whom I have chosen for my well-beloved; and Grimhild shall give him mead mingled with hurtful things, which shall cast us all into mighty strife.

Him shalt thou have, and him shalt thou quickly miss; and Atli the king shalt thou wed; and thy brethren shalt thou lose, and slay Atli withal in the end."

Gudrun answers, "Grief and woe to know that such things shall be!"

And therewith she and hers get them gone home to King Gjuki.

26.—SIGURD COMES TO THE GJUKINGS AND IS WEDDED TO GUDRUN.

Now Sigurd goes his way with all that great treasure, and in friendly wise he departs from them; and on Grani he rides with all his war-gear and the burden withal; and thus he rides until he comes to the hall of King Gjuki; there he rides into the burg, and that sees one of the king's men, and he spake withal—

"Sure it may be deemed that here is come one of the Gods, for his array is all done with gold, and his horse is far mightier than other horses, and the manner of his weapons is most exceeding goodly, and most of all the man himself far excels all other men ever seen."

So the king goes out with his court and greets the man, and asks—

"Who art thou who thus ridest into my burg, as none has durst hitherto without leave of my sons?"

He answered, "I am called Sigurd, son of King Sigmund."

Then said King Gjuki, "Be thou welcome here then, and take at our hands whatso thou willest."

So he went into the king's hall, and all men seemed lit-

tle beside him, and all men served him, and there he abode in great joyance.

Now oft they all ride abroad together, Sigurd and Gunnar and Hogni, and ever is Sigurd far the foremost of them, mighty men of their hands though they were.

But Grimhild finds how heartily Sigurd loved Brynhild, and how oft he talks of her; and she falls to thinking how well it were, if he might abide there and wed the daughter of King Gjuki, for she saw that none might come anigh to his goodliness, and what faith and good-help there was in him, and how that he had more wealth withal than folk might tell of any man; and the king did to him even as unto his own sons, and they for their tarts held him of more worth than themselves.

So on a night as they sat at the drink, the queen arose, and went before Sigurd, and said—

"Great joy we have in thine abiding here, and all good things will we put before thee to take of us; lo now, take this horn and drink thereof."

So he took it and drank, and therewithal she said, "Thy father shall be Gjuki the king, and I shall be thy mother, and Gunnar and Hogni shall be thy brethren, and all this shall be sworn with oaths each to each; and then surely shall the like of you never be found on earth."

Sigurd took her speech well, for with the drinking of that drink all memory of Brynhild departed from him. So there he abode awhile.

And on a day went Grimhild to Gjuki the king, and cast her arms about his neck, and spake—

"Behold, there has now come to us the greatest of great

hearts that the world holds; and needs must he be trusty and of great avail; give him thy daughter then, with plenteous wealth, and as much of rule as he will; perchance thereby he will be well content to abide here ever."

The king answered, "Seldom does it befall that kings offer their daughters to any; yet in higher wise will it be done to offer her to this man, than to take lowly prayers for her from others."

On a night Gudrun pours out the drink, and Sigurd beholds her how fair she is and how full of all courtesy.

Five seasons Sigurd abode there, and ever they passed their days together in good honour and friendship.

And so it befell that the kings held talk together, and Gjuki said—

"Great good thou givest us, Sigurd, and with exceeding strength thou strengthenest our realm."

Then Gunnar said, "All things that may be will we do for thee, so thou abidest here long; both dominion shalt thou have, and our sister freely and unprayed for, whom another man would not get for all his prayers."

Sigurd says, "Thanks have ye for this wherewith ye honour me, and gladly will I take the same."

Therewith they swore brotherhood together, and to be even as if they were children of one father and one mother; and a noble feast was holden, and endured many days, and Sigurd drank at the wedding of him and Gudrun; and there might men behold all manner of game and glee, and each day the feast better and better.

Now fare these folk wide over the world, and do many great deeds, and slay many kings' sons, and no man has

ever done such works of prowess as did they; then home they come again with much wealth won in war.

Sigurd gave of the serpent's heart to Gudrun, and she ate thereof, and became greater-hearted, and wiser than ere before; and the son of these twain was called Sigmund.

Now on a time went Grimhild to Gunnar her son, and spake—

"Fair blooms the life and fortune of thee, but for one thing only, and namely whereas thou art unwedded; go woo Brynhild; good rede is this, and Sigurd will ride with thee."

Gunnar answered, "Fair is she certes, and I am fain enow to win her;" and therewith he tells his father, and his brethren, and Sigurd, and they all prick him on to that wooing.

27.—THE WOOING OF BRYNHILD.

Now they array them joyously for their journey, and ride over hill and dale to the house of King Budli, and woo his daughter of him; in a good wise he took their speech, if so be that she herself would not deny them; but he said withal that so high-minded was she, that that man only might wed her whom she would.

Then they ride to Hlymdale; and there Heimir gave them good welcome; so Gunnar tells his errand; Heimir says, that she must needs wed but him whom she herself chose freely; and tells them how her abode was but a little way thence, and that he deemed that him only would she have who should ride through the flaming fire that was drawn round about her hall; so they depart and come

to the hall and the fire, and see there a castle with a golden roof-ridge, and all round about a fire roaring up.

Now Gunnar rode on Goti, but Hogni on Holkvi, and Gunnar smote his horse to face the fire, but he shrank aback.

Then said Sigurd, "Why givest thou back, Gunnar?"

He answered, "The horse will not tread this fire; but lend me thy horse Grani."

"Yea, with all my good will," says Sigurd.

Then Gunnar rides him at the fire, and yet nowise will Grani stir, nor may Gunnar any the more ride through that fire. So now they change semblance, Gunnar and Sigurd, even as Grimhild had taught them; then Sigurd in the likeness of Gunnar mounts and rides, Gram in his hand, and golden spurs on his heels; then leapt Grani into the fire when he felt the spurs; and a mighty roar arose as the fire burned ever madder, and the earth trembled, and the flames went up even unto the heavens, nor had any dared to ride as he rode, even as it were through the deep mirk.

But now the fire sank withal, and he leapt from his horse and went into the hall.

Now when Sigurd had passed through the fire, he came into a certain fair dwelling, and therein sat Brynhild.

She asked, "What man is it?"

Then he named himself Gunnar, son of Gjuki, and said —"Thou art awarded to me as my wife, by the good-will and word of thy father and thy foster-father, and I have ridden through the flames of thy fire, according to thy word that thou hast set forth."

"I wot not clearly," said she, "how I shall answer thee."

Now Sigurd stood upright on the hall floor, and leaned on the hilt of his sword, and he spake to Brynhild—

"In reward thereof, shall I pay thee a great dower in gold and goodly things?"

She answered in heavy mood from her seat, whereas she sat like unto swan on billow, having a sword in her hand, and a helm on her head, and being clad in a byrny. "O Gunnar," she says, "speak not to me of such things; unless thou be the first and best of all men; for then shalt thou slay those my wooers, if thou hast heart thereto; I have been in battles with the king of the Greeks, and our weapons were stained with red blood, and for such things still I yearn."

He answered, "Yea, certes many great deeds hast thou done; but yet call thou to mind thine oath, concerning the riding through of this fire, wherein thou didst swear that thou wouldst go with the man who should do this deed."

So she found that he spake but the sooth, and she paid heed to his words, and arose, and greeted him meetly, and he abode there three nights, and they lay in one bed together; but he took the sword Gram and laid it betwixt them; then she asked him why he laid it there; and he answered, that in that wise must he needs wed his wife or else get his bane.

Then she took from off her the ring Andvari's-loom, which he had given her aforetime, and gave it to him, but he gave her another ring out of Fafnir's hoard.

Thereafter he rode away through the same fire unto his fellows, and he and Gunnar changed semblances again, and rode unto Hlymdale, and told how it had gone with them.

That same day went Brynhild home to her foster-father, and tells him as one whom she trusted, how that there had come a king to her; "And he rode through my flaming fire, and said he was come to woo me, and named himself Gunnar; but I said that such a deed might Sigurd alone have done, with whom I plighted troth on the mountain; and he is my first troth-plight, and my well-beloved."

Heimir said that things must needs abide even as they had now come to pass.

Brynhild said, "Aslaug the daughter of me and Sigurd shall be nourished here with thee."

Now the kings fare home, but Brynhild goes to her father; Grimhild welcomes the kings meetly, and thanks Sigurd for his fellowship; and withal is a great feast made, and many were the guests thereat; and thither came Budli the King with his daughter Brynhild, and his son Atli, and for many days did the feast endure; and at that feast was Gunnar wedded to Brynhild; but when it was brought to an end, once more has Sigurd memory of all the oaths that he sware unto Brynhild, yet withal he let all things abide in rest and peace.

Brynhild and Gunnar sat together in great game and glee, and drank goodly wine.

28.—HOW THE QUEENS HELD ANGRY CONVERSE TOGETHER AT THE BATHING.

On a day as the Queens went to the river to bathe them, Brynhild waded the farthest out into the river; then asked Gudrun what that deed might signify.

Brynhild said, "Yea, and why then should I be equal to thee in this matter more than in others? I am minded to think that my father is mightier than thine, and my true-love has wrought many wondrous works of fame, and hath ridden the flaming fire withal, while thy husband was but the thrall of King Hjalprek."

Gudrun answered full of wrath, "Thou wouldst be wise if thou shouldst hold thy peace rather than revile my husband: lo now, the talk of all men it is, that none has ever abode in this world like unto him in all matters soever; and little it beseems thee of all folk to mock him who was thy first beloved: and Fafnir he slew, yea, and he rode thy flaming fire, whereas thou didst deem that he was Gunnar the King, and by thy side he lay, and took from thine hand the ring Andvari's-loom—here mayst thou well behold it!"

Then Brynhild saw the ring and knew it, and waxed as wan as a dead woman, and went home and spake no word the evening long. So when Sigurd came to bed to Gudrun she asked him why Brynhild's joy was so departed.

He answered, "I know not, but sore I misdoubt me that soon we shall know thereof overwell."

Gudrun said, "Why may she not love her life, having wealth and bliss, and the praise of all men, and the man withal that she would have?"

"Ah, yea!" said Sigurd, "and where in all the world was she then, when she said that she deemed she had the noblest of all men, and the dearest to her heart of all?"

Gudrun answers, "Tomorn will I ask her concerning this, who is the liefest to her of all men for a husband."

Singurd said, "Needs must I forbid thee this, and full surely wilt thou rue the deed if thou doest it."

Now the next morning they sat in the bower, and Brynhild was silent; then spake Gudrun—

"Be merry, Brynhild! Grievest thou because of that speech of ours together, or what other thing slayeth thy bliss?"

Brynhild answers, "With naught but evil intent thou sayest this, for a cruel heart thou hast."

"Say not so," said Gudrun; "but rather tell me all the tale."

Brynhild answers, "Ask such things only as are good for thee to know—matters meet for mighty dames. Good to love good things when all goes according to thy heart's desire!"

Gudrun says, "Early days for me to glory in that; but this word of thine looketh toward some foreseeing. What ill dost thou thrust at us? I did naught to grieve thee."

Brynhild answers, "For this shalt thou pay, in that thou has got Sigurd to thee,—nowise can I see thee living in the bliss thereof, whereas thou hast him, and the wealth and the might of him."

But Gudrun answered, "Naught knew I of your words and vows together; and well might my father look to the mating of me without dealing with thee first."

"No secret speech had we," quoth Brynhild, "though we swore oath together; and full well didst thou know that thou wentest about to beguile me; verily thou shalt have thy reward!"

Says Gudrun, "Thou are mated better than thou art worthy of; but thy pride and rage shall be hard to slake belike, and therefore shall many a man pay."

"Ah, I should be well content," said Brynhild, "if thou hadst not the nobler man!"

Gudrun answers, "So noble a husband hast thou, that who knows of a greater king or a lord of more wealth and might?"

Says Brynhild, "Sigurd slew Fafnir, and that only deed is of more worth than all the might of King Gunnar."

Gudrun answers, "Grani would not abide the fire under Gunnar the King, but Sigurd durst the deed, and thy heart may well abide without mocking him."

Brynhild answers, "Nowise will I hide from thee that I deem no good of Grimhild."

Says Gudrun, "Nay, lay no ill words on her, for in all things she is to thee as to her own daughter."

"Ah," says Brynhild, "she is the beginning of all this bale that biteth so; an evil drink she bare to Sigurd, so that he had no more memory of my very name."

"All wrong thou talkest; a lie without measure is this," quoth Gudrun.

Brynhild answered, "Have thou joy of Sigurd according to the measure of the wiles wherewith ye have beguiled me! unworthily have ye conspired against me; may all things go with you as my heart hopes!"

Gudrun says, "More joy shall I have of him than thy wish would give unto me: but to no man's mind it came, that he had aforetime his pleasure of me; nay not once."

"Evil speech thou speakest," says Brynhild; "when thy wrath runs off thou wilt rue it; but come now, let us no more cast angry words one at the other!"

Says Gudrun, "Thou wert the first to cast such words at me, and now thou makest as if thou wouldst amend it, but a cruel and hard heart abides behind."

"Let us lay aside vain babble," says Brynhild. "Long did I hold my peace concerning my sorrow of heart, and, lo now, thy brother alone do I love; let us fall to other talk."

Gudrun said, "Far beyond all this doth thine heart look."

And so ugly ill befell from that going to the river, and that knowing of the ring, wherefrom did all their talk arise.

29.—OF BRYNHILD'S GREAT GRIEF AND MOURNING.

AFTER this talk Brynhild lay a-bed, and tidings were brought to King Gunnar that Brynhild was sick; he goes to see her thereon, and asks what ails her; but she answered him naught, but lay there as one dead: and when he was hard on her for an answer, she said—

"What didst thou with that ring that I gave thee, even the one which King Budli gave me at our last parting, when thou and King Gjuki came to him and threatened fire and the sword, unless ye had me to wife? Yea, at that time he led me apart, and asked me which I had

chosen of those who were come; but I prayed him that I might abide to ward the land and be chief over the third part of his men; then were there two choices for me to deal betwixt, either that I should be wedded to him whom he would, or lose all my weal and friendship at his hands; and he said withal that his friendship would be better to me than his wrath: then I bethought me whether I should yield to his will, or slay many a man; and therewithal I deemed that it would avail little to strive with him, and so it fell out, that I promised to wed whosoever should ride the horse Grani with Fafnir's Hoard, and ride through my flaming fire, and slay those men whom I called on him to slay, and now so it was, that none durst ride save Sigurd only, because he lacked no heart thereto; yea, and the Worm he slew, and Regin, and five kings beside; but thou, Gunnar, durst do naught; as pale as a dead man didst thou wax, and no king thou art, and no champion; so whereas I made a vow unto my father, that him alone would I love who was the noblest man alive, and that this is none save Sigurd, lo, now have I broken my oath and brought it to naught, since he is none of mine, and for this cause shall I compass thy death; and a great reward of evil things have I wherewith to reward Grimhild;—never, I wot, has woman lived eviler or of lesser heart than she."

Gunnar answered in such wise that few might hear him, "Many a vile word hast thou spoken, and an evil-hearted woman art thou, whereas thou revilest a woman far better than thou; never would she curse her life as thou dost; nay, nor has she tormented dead folk, or murdered any; but lives her life well praised of all."

Brynhild answered, "Never have I dwelt with evil things privily, or done loathsome deeds;—yet most fain I am to slay thee."

And therewith would she slay King Gunnar, but Hogni laid her in fetters; but then Gunnar spake withal—

"Nay, I will not that she abide in fetters."

Then said she, "Heed it not! for never again seest thou me glad in thine hall, never drinking, never at the chess-play, never speaking the words of kindness, never overlaying the fair cloths with gold, never giving thee good counsel;—ah, my sorrow of heart that I might not get Sigurd to me!"

Then she sat up and smote her needlework, and rent it asunder, and bade set open her bower doors, that far away might the wailings of her sorrow be heard; then great mourning and lamentation there was, so that folk heard it far and wide through that abode.

Now Gudrun asked her bower-maidens why they sat so joyless and downcast. "What has come to you, that ye fare ye as witless women, or what unheard-of wonders have befallen you?"

Then answered a waiting lady, hight Swaflod, "An untimely, an evil day it is, and our hall is filled with lamentation."

Then spake Gudrun to one of her handmaids, "Arise, for we have slept long; go, wake Brynhild, and let us fall to our needlework and be merry."

"Nay, nay," she says, "nowise may I wake her, or talk with her; for many days has she drunk neither mead nor wine; surely the wrath of the Gods has fallen upon her."

Then spake Gudrun to Gunnar, "Go and see her," she says, "and bid her know that I am grieved with her grief."

"Nay," says Gunnar, "I am forbid to go see her or to share her weal."

Nevertheless he went unto her, and strives in many wise to have speech of her, but gets no answer whatsoever: therefore he gets him gone and finds Hogni, and bids him go see her: he said he was loth thereto, but went, and gat no more of her.

Then they go and find Sigurd, and pray him to visit her; he answered naught thereto, and so matters abode for that night.

But the next day, when he came home from hunting, Sigurd went to Gudrun, and spake—

"In such wise do matters show to me, as though great and evil things will betide from this trouble and upheaving, and that Brynhild will surely die."

Gudrun answers, "O my lord, by great wonders is she encompassed, seven days and seven nights has she slept, and none has dared wake her."

"Nay, she sleeps not," said Sigurd, "her heart is dealing rather with dreadful intent against me."

Then said Gudrun, weeping, "Woe worth the while for thy death! go and see her; and wot if her fury may not be abated; give her gold, and smother up her grief and anger therewith!"

Then Sigurd went out, and found the door of Brynhild's chamber open; he deemed she slept, and drew the the clothes from off her, and said—

"Awake, Brynhild! the sun shineth now over all the

house, and thou hast slept enough; cast off grief from thee, and take up gladness!"

She said, "And how then hast thou dared to come to me? in this treason none was worse to me than thou?"

Said Sigurd, "Why wilt thou not speak to folk? for what cause sorrowest thou?"

Brynhild answers, "Ah, to thee will I tell of my wrath!"

Sigurd said, "As one under a spell art thou, if thou deemest that there is aught cruel in my heart against thee; but thou hast him for husband whom thou didst choose."

"Ah, nay," she said, "never did Gunnar ride through the fire to me, nor did he give me to dower the host of the slain: I wondered at the man who came into my hall; for I deemed indeed that I knew thine eyes; but I might not see clearly, or divide the good from the evil, because of the veil that lay heavy on my fortune."

Says Sigurd, "No nobler men are there than the sons of Gjuki; they slew the king of the Danes, and that great chief, the brother of King Budli."

Brynhild answered, "Surely for many an ill-deed must I reward them; mind me not of my griefs against them! But thou, Sigurd, slewest the Worm, and rodest the fire through; yea, and for my sake, and not one of the sons of King Gjuki."

Sigurd answers, "I am not thy husband, and thou art not my wife; yet did a farfamed king pay dower to thee."

Says Brynhild, "Never looked I at Gunnar in such a

wise that my heart smiled on him; and hard and fell am I to him, though I hide it from others."

"A marvellous thing," says Sigurd, "not to love such a king; what angers thee most? for surely his love should be better to thee than gold."

"This is the sorest sorrow to me," she said, "that the bitter sword is not reddened in thy blood."

"Have no fear thereof!" says he, "no long while to wait or the bitter sword stand deep in my heart; and no worse needest thou to pray for thyself, for thou wilt not live when I am dead; the days of our two lives shall be few enough from henceforth."

Brynhild answers, "Enough and to spare of bale is in thy speech, since thou bewrayedst me, and didst twin (separate) me and all bliss;—naught do I heed my life or death."

Sigurd answers, "Ah, live, and love King Gunnar and me withal! and all my wealth will I give thee if thou die not."

Brynhild answers, "Thou knowest me not, nor the heart that is in me; for thou are the first and best of all men, and I am become the most loathsome of all women to thee."

"This is truer," says Sigurd, "that I loved thee better than myself, though I fell into the wiles from whence our lives may not escape; for whenso my own heart and mind availed me, then I sorrowed sore that thou wert not my wife; but as I might I put my trouble from me, for in a king's dwelling was I; and withal and in spite of all I was well content that we were all together. Well

may it be, that that shall come to pass which is foretold; neither shall I fear the fulfilment thereof."

Brynhild answered, and said, "Too late thou tellest me that my grief grieved thee: little pity shall I find now."

Sigurd said, "This my heart would, that thou and I should go into one bed together; even so wouldst thou be my wife."

Said Brynhild, "Such words may nowise be spoken, nor will I have two kings in one hall; I will lay my life down rather than beguile Gunnar the King."

And therewith she call to mind how they met, they two, on the mountain, and swore oath each to each.

"But now is all changed, and I will not live."

"I might not call to mind thy name," said Sigurd, "or know thee again, before the time of thy wedding; the greatest of all griefs is that."

Then said Brynhild, "I swore an oath to wed the man who should ride my flaming fire, and that oath will I hold to, or die."

"Rather than thou die, I will wed thee, and put away Gudrun," said Sigurd.

But therewithal so swelled the heart betwixt the sides of him, that the rings of his byrny burst asunder.

"I will not have thee," says Brynhild, "nay, nor any other!"

Then Sigurd got him gone.

So saith the song of Sigurd—

> "Out then went Sigurd,
> The great kings' well-loved,
> From the speech and the sorrow,
> Sore drooping, so grieving,

That the shirt round about him
Of iron rings woven,
From the sides brake asunder
Of the brave in the battle."

So when Sigurd came into the hall, Gunnar asked if he had come to a knowledge of what great grief lay heavy on her, or if she had power of speech: and Sigurd said that she lacked it not. So now Gunnar goes to her again, and asked her, what wrought her woe, or if there were anything that might amend it.

"I will not live," says Brynhild, "for Sigurd has bewrayed me; yea, and thee no less, whereas thou didst suffer him to come into my bed: lo thou, two men in one dwelling I will not have; and this shall be Sigurd's death, or thy death, or my death;—for now has he told Gudrun all, and she is mocking me even now!"

30.—OF THE SLAYING OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

THEREAFTER Brynhild went out, and sat under her bower-wall, and had many words of wailing to say, and still she cried that all things were loathsome to her, both land and lordship alike, so she might not have Sigurd.

But therewith came Gunnar to her yet again, and Brynhild spake, "Thou shalt lose both realm and wealth, and thy life and me, for I shall fare home to my kin, and abide there in sorrow, unless thou slayest Sigurd and his son; never nourish thou a wolfcub."

Gunnar grew sick at heart thereat, and might nowise see what fearful thing lay beneath it all; he was bound to Sigurd by oath, and this way and that way swung the

heart within him; but at the last he bethought him of the measureless shame if his wife went from him, and he said within himself, "Brynhild is better to me than all things else, and the fairest woman of all women, and I will lay down my life rather than lose the love of her." And herewith he called to him his brother and spake,—

"Trouble is heavy on me," and he tells him that he must needs slay Sigurd, for that he has failed him where in he trusted him; "so let us be lords of the gold and the realm withal."

Hogni answers, "Ill it behoves us to break our oaths with wrack and wrong, and withal great aid we have in him; no kings shall be as great as we, if so be the King of the Hun-folk may live; such another brother-in-law never may we get again; bethink thee how good it is to have such a brother-in-law, and such sons to our sister! But well I see how things stand, for this has Brynhild stirred thee up to, and surely shall her counsel drag us into huge shame and scathe."

Gunnar says, "Yet shall it be brought about: and, lo, a rede thereto;—let us egg on our brother Guttorm to the deed; he is young, and of little knowledge, and is clean out of all the oaths moreover."

"Ah, set about in ill wise," says Hogni, "and though indeed it may well be compassed, a due reward shall we gain for the bewrayal of such a man as is Sigurd."

Gunnar says, "Sigurd shall die, or I shall die.'"

And therewith he bids Brynhild arise and be glad at heart: so she arose, and still ever she said that Gunnar should come no more into her bed till the deed was done.

So the brothers fall to talk, and Gunnar says that it is a deed well worthy of death, that taking of Brynhild's maidenhood; "So come now, let us prick on Guttorm to do the deed."

Therewith they call him to them, and offer him gold and great dominion, as they well have might to do. Yea, and they took a certain worm and somewhat of wolf's flesh and let seethe them together, and gave him to eat of the same, even as the singer sings—

> Fish of the wild-wood,
> Worm smooth crawling,
> With wolf-meat mingled,
> They minced for Guttorm;
> Then in the beaker,
> In the wine his mouth knew,
> They set it, still doing
> More deeds of wizards.

Wherefore with the eating of this meat he grew so wild and eager, and with all things about him, and with the heavy words of Grimhild, that he gave his word to do the deed; and mighty honour they promised him in reward thereof.

But of these evil wiles naught at all knew Sigurd, for he might not deal with his shapen fate, nor the measure of his life-days, neither deemed he that he was worthy of such things at their hands.

So Guttorm went in to Sigurd the next morning as he lay upon his bed, yet durst he not do aught against him, but shrank back out again; yea, and even so he fared a second time, for so bright and eager were the eyes of Sigurd that few durst look upon him. But the third

time he went in, and there lay Sigurd asleep; then Guttorm drew his sword and thrust Sigurd through in such wise that the sword point smote into the bed beneath him; then Sigurd awoke with that wound, and Guttorm gat him unto the door; but therewith Sigurd caught up the sword Gram, and cast it after him, and it smote him on the back, and struck him asunder in the midst, so that the feet of him fell one way, and the head and hands back into the chamber.

Now Gudrun lay asleep on Sigurd's bosom, but she woke up unto woe that may not be told of, all swimming in the blood of him, and in such wise did she bewail her with weeping and words of sorrow, that Sigurd rose up on the bolster, and spake.

"Weep not," said he, "for thy brothers live for thy delight; but a young son have I, too young to be ware of his foes; and an ill turn have these played against their own fortune; for never will they get a mightier brother-in-law to ride abroad with them; nay, nor a better son to their sister, than this one, if he may grow to man's estate. Lo, now is that come to pass which was foretold me long ago, but from mine eyes has it been hidden, for none may fight against his fate and prevail. Behold this has Brynhild brought to pass, even she who loves me before all men; but this may I swear, that never have I wrought ill to Gunnar, but rather have ever held fast to my oath with him, nor was I ever too much a friend to his wife. And now if I had been forewarned, and had been afoot with my weapons, then should many a man have lost his life or ever I had fallen, and all those brethren should

have been slain, and a harder work would the slaying of me have been than the slaying of the mightiest bull or the mightiest boar of the wild-wood."

And even therewithal life left the King; but Gudrun moaned and drew a weary breath, and Brynhild heard it, and laughed when she heard her moaning.

Then said Gunnar, "Thou laughest not because thy heart-roots are gladdened, or else why doth thy visage wax so wan? Sure an evil creature thou art; most like thou art nigh to thy death! Lo now, how meet would it be for thee to behold thy brother Atli slain before thine eyes, and that thou shouldst stand over him dead; whereas we must needs now stand over our brother-in-law in such a case—our brother-in-law and our brother's bane."

She answered, "None need mock at the measure of slaughter being unfulfilled; yet heedeth not Atli your wrath or your threats; yea, he shall live longer than ye, and be a mightier man."

Hogni spake and said, "Now hath come to pass the soothsaying of Brynhild; an ill work not to be atoned for."

And Gudrun said, "My kinsmen have slain my husband; but ye, when ye next ride to the war and are come into the battle, then shall ye look about and see that Sigurd is neither on the right hand nor the left, and ye shall know that he was your good-hap and your strength; and if he had lived and had sons, then should ye have been strengthened by his offspring and his kin."

31.—OF THE LAMENTATION OF GUDRUN OVER SIGURD DEAD, AS IT IS TOLD IN THE ANCIENT SONGS.[1]

Gudrun of old days
Drew near to dying
As she sat in sorrow
Over Sigurd;
Yet she sighed not
Nor smote hand on hand,
Nor waïled she aught
As other women.

Then went earls to her,
Full of all wisdom,
Fain help to deal
To her dreadful heart:
Hushed was Gudrun
Of wail, or greeting,
But with a heavy woe
Was her heart a-breaking.

Bright and fair
Sat the great earls' brides,
Gold arrayed
Before Gudrun;
Each told the tale
Of her great trouble,
The bitterest bale
She erst abode.

Then spake Giaflaug,
Gjuki's sister:
"Lo upon earth
I live most loveless
Who of five mates
Must see the ending,
Of daughters twain
And three sisters,

[1]This chapter is the Eddaic poem, called the first Lay of Gudrun, inserted here by the translators.

Of brethren eight,
And abide behind lonely."

Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail and greeting,
So heavy was she
For her dead husband,
So dreadful-hearted
For the King laid dead there.

Then spake Herborg
Queen of Hunland—
"Crueller tale
Have I to tell of,
Of my seven sons
Down in the Southlands,
And the eighth man, my mate,
Felled in the death-mead.

"Father and mother,
And four brothers,
On the wide sea,
The winds and death played with;
The billows beat
On the bulwark boards.

"Alone must I sing o'er them,
Alone must I array them,
Alone must my hands deal with
Their departing;
And all this was
In one season's wearing,
And none was left
For love or solace.

"Then was I bound
A prey of the battle,
When that same season
Wore to its ending;

As a tiring may
Must I bind the shoon
Of the duke's high dame,
Every day at dawning.

From her jealous hate
Gat I heavy mocking,
Cruel lashes
She laid upon me,
Never met I
Better master
Or mistress worser
In all the wide world."

Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail of greeting,
So heavy was she
For her dead husband,
So dreadful-hearted
For the King laid dead there.

Then spake Gullrond,
Gjuki's daughter—
"O foster-mother,
Wise as thou mayst be,
Naught canst thou better
The young wife's bale."
And she bade uncover
The dead King's corpse.

She swept the sheet
Away from Sigurd,
And turned his cheek,
Towards his wife's knees—
"Look on thy loved one
Lay lips to his lips,
E'en as thou wert clinging
To thy king alive yet!"

Once looked Gudrun—
One look only,
And saw her lord's locks
Lying all bloody,
The great man's eyes
Glazed and deadly,
And his heart's bulwark
Broken by sword-edge.

Back then sank Gudrun,
Back on the bolster,
Loosed was her head array,
Red did her cheeks grow,
And the rain-drops ran
Down over her knees.

Then wept Gudrun,
Gjuki's daughter,
So that the tears flowed
Through the pillow;
As the geese withal
That were in the homefield,
The fair fowls the maid owned,
Fell a-screaming.

Then spake Gullrond,
Gjuki's daughter—
"Surely knew I
No love like your love
Among all men,
On the mould abiding;
Naught wouldst thou joy in
Without or within doors,
O my sister,
Save beside Sigurd."

Then spake Gudrun,
Gjuki's daughter—

"Such was my Sigurd
Among the sons of Gjuki,
As is the king leek
O'er the low grass waxing,
Or a bright stone
Strung on band,
Or a pearl of price
On a prince's brow.

"Once was I counted
By the king's warriors
Higher than any
Of Herjan's maids;
Now am I as little
As the leaf may be,
Amid wind-swept wood
Now when dead he lieth.

"I miss from my seat,
I miss from my bed,
My darling of sweet speech.
Wrought the sons of Gjuki,
Wrought the sons of Gjuki,
This sore sorrow,
Yea, for their sister,
Most sore sorrow.

"So may your lands
Lie waste on all sides,
As ye have broken
Your bounden oaths!
Ne'er shalt thou, Gunnar,
The gold have joy of,
The dear-bought rings
Shall drag thee to death,
Whereon thou swarest
Oath unto Sigurd.

"Ah, in the days by-gone
Great mirth in the homefield

When my Sigurd
Set saddle on Grani,
And they went their ways
For the wooing of Brynhild!
An ill day, an ill woman,
And most ill hap!"

Then spake Brynhild,
Budli's daughter—
"May the woman lack
Both love and children,
Who gained greeting
For thee, O Gudrun!
Who gave thee this morning
Many words!"

Then spake Gullrond,
Gjuki's daughter—
"Hold peace of such words
Thou hated of all folk!
The bane of brave men
Hast thou been ever,
All waves of ill
Wash over thy mind,
To seven great kings
Hast thou been a sore sorrow,
And the death of good will
To wives and women."

Then spake Brynhild,
Budli's daughter—
"None but Atli
Brought bale upon us,
My very brother
Born of Budli.

"When we saw in the hall
Of the Hunnish people
The gold a-gleaming
On the kingly Gjukings;

I have paid for that faring
Oft and full,
And for the sight
That then I saw."

By a pillar she stood
And strained its wood to her;
From the eyes of Brynhild,
Budli's daughter,
Flashed out fire,
And she snorted forth venom,
As the sore wounds she gazed on
Of the dead-slain Sigurd.

32.—OF THE ENDING OF BRYNHILD.

And now none might know for what cause Brynhild must bewail with weeping for what she had prayed for with laughter: but she spake—

"Such a dream I had, Gunnar, as that my bed was acold, and that thou didst ride into the hands of thy foes: lo now, ill shall it go with thee and all thy kin, O ye breakers of oaths; for on the day thou slayedst him, dimly didst thou remember how thou didst blend thy blood with the blood of Sigurd, and with an ill reward hast thou rewarded him for all he did well to thee; whereas he gave unto thee to be the mightiest of men; and well was it proven how fast he held to his oath sworn, when he came to me and laid betwixt us the sharp-edged sword that in venom had been made hard. All too soon did ye fall to working wrong against him and against me, whenas I abode at home with my father, and had all that I would, and had no will that any one of you should be any of mine, as ye rode into our garth, ye three kings together;

but then Atli led me apart privily, and asked me if I would not have him who rode Grani;—yea, a man nowise like unto you; but in those days I plighted myself to the son of King Sigmund and no other; and lo, now, no better shall ye fare for the death of me."

Then rose up Gunnar, and laid his arms about her neck, and besought her to live and have wealth from him; and all others in likewise letted her from dying; but she thrust them all from her, and said that it was not the part of any to let her in that which was her will.

Then Gunnar called to Hogni, and prayed him for counsel, and bade him go to her, and see if he might perchance soften her dreadful heart, saying withal, that now they had need enough on their hands in the slaking of her grief, till time might get over.

But Hogni answered, "Nay, let no man hinder her from dying; for no gain will she be to us, nor has she been gainsome since she came hither!"

Now she bade bring forth much gold, and bade all those come thither who would have wealth: then she caught up a sword, and thrust it under her armpit, and sank aside upon the pillows, and said, "Come, take gold whoso will!"

But all held their peace, and she said, "Take the gold, and be glad thereof!"

And therewith she spake unto Gunnar, "Now for a little while will I tell of that which shall come to pass hereafter; for speedily shall ye be at one again with Gudrun by the rede of Grimhild the Wise-wife; and the daughter of Gudrun and Sigurd shall be called Swanhild, the fair-

est of all women born. Gudrun shall be given to Atli, yet not with her good will. Thou shalt be fain to get Oddrun, but that shall Atli forbid thee; but privily shall ye meet, and much shall she love thee. Atli shall bewray thee, and cast thee into a worm-close, and thereafter shall Atli and his sons be slain, and Gudrun shall be their slayer; and afterwards shall the great waves bear her to the burg of King Jonakr, to whom she shall bear sons of great fame: Swanhild shall be sent from the land and given to King Jormunrek; and her shall bite the rede of Bikki, and therewithal is the kin of you clean gone; and more sorrows therewith for Gudrun.

"And now I pray thee, Gunnar, one last boon.—Let make a great bale on the plain meads for all of us; for me, and for Sigurd, and for those who were slain with him, and let that be covered over with cloth dyed red by the folk of the Gauls,[1] and burn me thereon on one side of the King of the Huns, and on the other those men of mine, two at the head and two at the feet, and two hawks withal; and even so is all shared equally; and lay there betwixt us a drawn sword, as in the other days when we twain stepped into one bed together; and then may we have the name of man and wife, nor shall the door swing to at the heel of him as I go behind him. Nor shall that be a niggard company if there follow him those five bond-women and eight bondmen, whom my father gave me, and those burn there withal who were slain with Sigurd.

"Now more yet would I say, but for my wounds, but

[1]The original has *raudu manna blodi*, red-dyed in the blood of men; the Sagaman's original error in dealing with the word *Valaript* in the corresponding passage of the short lay of Sigurd.—*Tr.*

my life-breath flits; the wounds open,—yet have I said sooth."

Now is the dead corpse of Sigurd arrayed in olden wise, and a mighty pyre is raised, and when it was somewhat kindled, there was laid thereon the dead corpse of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane, and his son of three winters whom Brynhild had let slay, and Guttorm withal; and when the bale was all ablaze, thereunto was Brynhild borne out, when she had spoken with her bower-maidens, and bid them take the gold that she would give; and then died Brynhild, and was burned there by the side of Sigurd, and thus their life-days ended.

33.—GUDRUN WEDDED TO ATLI.

Now so it is, that whoso heareth these tidings sayeth, that no such an one as was Sigurd was left behind him in the world, nor ever was such a man brought forth because of all the worth of him, nor may his name ever minish by eld in the Dutch Tongue nor in all the Northern Lands, while the world standeth fast.

The story tells that, on a day, as Gudrun sat in her bower, she fell to saying, "Better was life in those days when I had Sigurd; he who was far above other men as gold is above iron, or the leek over other grass of the field, or the hart over other wild things; until my brethren begrudged me such a man, the first and best of all men; and so they might not sleep or they had slain him. Huge clamour made Grani when he saw his master and lord sore wounded, and then I spoke to him even as with a man, but he fell drooping down to the earth, for he knew that Sigurd was slain."

Thereafter Gudrun gat her gone into the wild woods, and heard on all ways round about her the howling of wolves, and deemed death a merrier thing than life. Then she went till she came to the hall of King Alf, and sat there in Denmark with Thora, the daughter of Hakon, for seven seasons, and abode with good welcome. And she set forth her needlework before her, and did thereinto many deeds and great, and fair plays after the fashion of those days, swords and byrnies, and all the gear of kings, and the ship of King Sigmund sailing along the land; yea, and they wrought there, how they fought, Sigar and Siggeir, south in Fion. Such was their disport; and now Gudrun was somewhat solaced of her grief.

So Grimhild comes to hear where Gudrun has taken up her abode, and she calls her sons to talk with her, and asks whether they will make atonement to Gudrun for her son and her husband, and said that it was but meet and right to do so.

Then Gunnar spake, and said that he would atone for her sorrows with gold.

So they send for their friends, and array their horses, their helms, and their shields, and their byrnies, and all their war-gear; and their journey was furnished forth in the noblest wise, and no champion who was of the great men might abide at home; and their horses were clad in mail-coats, and every knight of them had his helm done over with gold or with silver.

Grimhild was of their company, for she said that their errand would never be brought fairly to pass if she sat at home.

There were well five hundred men, and noble men rode with them. There was Waldemar of Denmark, and Eymod and Jarisleif withal. So they went into the hall of King Alf, and there abode them the Longbeards, and Franks, and Saxons: they fared with all their war-gear, and had over them red fur-coats. Even as the song says—

Byrnies short cut,
Strong helms hammered,
Girt with good swords,
Red hair gleaming.

They were fain to choose good gifts for their sister, and spake softly to her, but in none of them would she trow. Then Gunnar brought unto her a drink mingled with hurtful things, and this she must needs drink, and with the drinking thereof she had no more memory of their guilt against her.

But in that drink was blended the might of the earth and the sea with the blood of her son; and in that horn were all letters cut and reddened with blood, as is said hereunder—

On the horn's face were there
All the kin of letters
Cut aright and reddened,
How should I rede them rightly?
The ling-fish long
Of the land of Hadding,
Wheat-ears unshorn,
And wild things' inwards.

In that beer were mingled
Many ills together,

Blood of all the wood
And brown-burnt acorns,
The black dew of the hearth,
The God-doomed dead beast's inwards,
And the swine's liver sodden
Because all wrongs that deadens.

And so now, when their hearts are brought anigh to each other, great cheer they made: then came Grimhild to Gudrun, and spake—

"All hail to thee, daughter! I give thee gold and all kinds of good things to take to thee after thy father, dear-bought rings and bed-gear of the maids of the Huns, the most courteous and well dight of all women; and thus is thy husband atoned for: and thereafter shalt thou be given to Atli, the mighty king, and be mistress of all his might. Cast not all thy friends aside for one man's sake, but do according to our bidding."

Gudrun answers, "Never will I wed Atli the King: unseemly it is for us to get offspring betwixt us."

Grimhild says, "Nourish not thy wrath; it shall be to thee as if Sigurd and Sigmund were alive when thou hast borne sons."

Gudrun says, "I cannot take my heart from thoughts of him, for he was the first of all men."

Grimhild says, "So it is shapen that thou must have this king and none else."

Says Gudrun, "Give not this man to me, for an evil thing shall come upon thy kin from him, and to his own sons shall he deal evil, and be rewarded with a grim revenge thereafter."

Then waxed Grimhild fell at those words, and spake, "Do even as we bid thee, and take therefore great honour, and our friendship, and the steads withal called Vinbjorg and Valbjorg."

And such might was in the words of her, that even so must it come to pass.

Then Gudrun spake, "Thus then must it needs befall, howsoever against the will of me, and for little joy shall it be and for great grief."

Then men leaped on their horses, and their women were set in wains. So they fared four days a-riding and other four a-shipboard, and yet four more again by land and road, till at the last they came to a certain high-built hall; then came to meet Gudrun many folk thronging; and an exceedingly goodly feast was there made, even as the word had gone between either kin, and it passed forth in most proud and stately wise. And at that feast drinks Atli his bridal with Gudrun; but never did her heart laugh on him, and little sweet and kind was their life together.

34.—ATLI BIDS THE GJUKINGS TO HIM.

Now tells the tale that on a night King Atli woke from sleep and spake to Gudrun—

"Medreamed," said he, "that thou didst thrust me through with a sword."

Then Gudrun areded the dream, and said that it betokened fire, whenas folk dreamed of iron. "It befalls of thy pride belike, in that thou deemest thyself the first of men."

Atli said, "Moreover I dreamed that here waxed two

service-tree saplings, and fain I was that they should have no scathe of me; then these were riven up by the roots and reddened with blood, and borne to the bench, and I was bidden eat thereof.

"Yea, yet again I dreamed that two hawks flew from my hand hungry and unfed, and fared to hell, and me-seemed their hearts were mingled with honey, and that I ate thereof.

"And then again I dreamed that two fair whelps lay before me yelling aloud, and that the flesh of them I ate, though my will went not with the eating."

Gudrun says, "Nowise good are these dreams, yet shall they come to pass; surely thy sons are nigh to death, and many heavy things shall fall upon us."

"Yet again I dreamed," said he, "and methought I lay in a bath, and folk took counsel to slay me."

Now these things wear away with time, but in nowise was their life together fond.

Now falls Atli to thinking of where may be gotten that plenteous gold which Sigurd had owned, but King Gunnar and his brethren were lords thereof now.

Atli was a great king and mighty, wise, and a lord of many men; and now he falls to counsel with his folk as to the ways of them. He wotted well that Gunnar and his brethren had more wealth than any others might have; and so he falls to the rede of sending men to them, and bidding them to a great feast, and honouring them in diverse wise, and the chief of those messengers was hight Vingi.

Now the queen wots of their conspiring, and misdoubts

her that this would mean some beguiling of her brethren; so she cut runes, and took a gold ring, and knit therein a wolf's hair, and gave it into the hands of the king's messengers.

Thereafter they go their ways according to the king's bidding; and or ever they came aland Vingi beheld the runes, and turned them about in such a wise as if Gudrun prayed her brethren in her runes to go meet King Atli.

Thereafter they came to the hall of King Gunnar, and had good welcome at his hands, and great fires were made for them, and in great joyance they drank of the best of drink.

Then spake Vingi, "King Atli sends me hither, and is fain that ye go to his house and home in all glory, and take of him exceeding honours, helm and shields, swords and byrnies, gold and goodly raiment, horses, hosts of war, and great and wide lands, for, saith he, he is fainest of all things to bestow his realm and lordship upon you."

Then Gunnar turned his head aside, and spoke to Hogni—

"In what wise shall we take this bidding? might and wealth he bids us take; but no kings know I who have so much gold as we have, whereas we have all the hoard which lay once on Gnitaheath; and great are our chambers, and full of gold, and weapons for smiting, and all kinds of raiment of war, and well I wot that amidst all men my horse is the best, and my sword the sharpest, and my gold the most glorious."

Hogni answers, "A marvel is it to me of his bidding, for seldom hath he done in such a wise, and ill-counselled will it be to wend to him; lo now, when I saw those dear-bought things the king sends us I wondered to behold a wolf's hair knit to a certain gold ring; belike Gudrun deems him to be minded as a wolf towards us, and will have naught of our faring."

But withal Vingi shows him the runes which he said Gudrun had sent.

Now the most of folk go to bed, but these drank on still with certain others; and Kostbera, the wife of Hogni, the fairest of women, came to them, and looked on the runes.

But the wife of Gunnar was Glaumvor, a great-hearted wife.

So these twain poured out, and the kings drank, and were exceeding drunken, and Vingi notes it, and says—

"Naught may I hide that King Atli is heavy of foot and over-old for the warding of his realm; but his sons are young and of no account; now will he give you rule over his realms while they are yet thus young, and most fain will he be that ye have the joy thereof before all others."

Now so it befell both that Gunnar was drunk and that great dominion was held out to him, nor might he work against the fate shapen for him; so he gave his word to go, and tells Hogni his brother thereof.

But he answered, "Thy word given must even stand now, nor will I fail to follow thee, but most loth am I to this journey."

35.—THE DREAMS OF THE WIVES OF THE GJUKINGS.

So WHEN men had drunk their fill, they fared to sleep; then falls Kostbera to beholding the runes, and spelling over the letters, and sees that beneath were other things cut, and that the runes are guileful; yet because of her wisdom she had skill to read them aright. So then she goes to bed by her husband; but when they awoke, she spake unto Hogni—

"Thou art minded to wend away from home—ill-counselled is that; abide till another time! Scarce a keen reader of runes art thou, if thou deemest thou hast beheld in them the bidding of thy sister to this journey; lo, I read the runes, and had marvel of so wise a woman as Gudrun is, that she should have miscut them; but that which lieth underneath beareth your bane with it,—yea, either she lacked a letter, or others have dealt guilefully with the runes.

"And now hearken to my dream; for therein methought there fell in upon us here a river exceeding strong, and brake up the timbers of the hall."

He answered, "Full oft are ye evil of mind, ye women, but for me, I was not made in such wise as to meet men with evil who deserve no evil; belike he will give us good welcome."

She answered, "Well, the thing must ye yourselves prove, but no friendship follows this bidding:—but yet again I dreamed that another river fell in here with a great and grimly rush, and tore up the dais of the hall, and brake the legs of both you brethren; surely that betokeneth somewhat."

He answers, "Meadows along our way, whereas thou didst dream of the river; for when we go through the meadows, plentifully doth the seeds of the hay hang about our legs."

"Again I dreamed" she says, "that thy cloak was afire, and that the flame blazed up above the hall."

Says he, "Well, I wot what that shall betoken; here lieth my fair-dyed raiment, and it shall burn and blaze, whereas thou dreamedst of the cloak."

"Methought a bear came in," she says, "and brake up the king's high-seat, and shook his paws in such a wise that we were all affrighted thereat, and he gat us all together into the mouth of him, so that we might avail us naught, and thereof fell great horror on us."

He answered, "Some great storm will befall, whereas thou hadst a white bear in thy mind."

"And another methought came in," she says, "and swept adown the hall, and drenched me and all of us with blood, and ill shall that betoken, for methought it was the double of King Atli."

He answered, "Full oft do we slaughter beasts freely, and smite down great neat for our cheer, and the dream of the erne has but to do with oxen; yea, Atli is heart-whole toward us."

And therewithal they cease this talk.

36.—OF THE JOURNEY OF THE GJUKINGS TO KING ATLI.

Now tells the tale of Gunnar, that in the same wise it fared with him; for when they awoke, Glaumvor his wife told him many dreams which seemed to her like to

betoken guile coming; but Gunnar areded them all in other wise.

"This was one of them," said she; "methought a bloody sword was borne into the hall here, wherewith thou wert thrust through, and at either end of that sword wolves howled."

The king answered, "Cur dogs shall bite me belike; blood-stained weapons oft betoken dog's snappings."

She said, "Yet again I dreamed—that women came in, heavy and drooping, and chose thee for their mate; may-happen these would be thy fateful women."

He answered, "Hard to arede is this, and none may set aside the fated measure of his days, nor is it unlike that my time is short."

So in the morning they arose, and were minded for the journey, but some letted them herein.

Then cried Gunnar to the man who is called Fjornir—

"Arise, and give us to drink goodly wine from great tuns, because mayhappen this shall be the very last of all our feasts; for belike if we die the old wolf shall come by the gold, and that bear shall nowise spare the bite of his war-tusks."

Then all the folk of his household brought them on their way weeping.

The son of Hogni said—

"Fare ye well with merry tide."

The more part of their folk were left behind; Solar and Gnœvar, the sons of Hogni, fared with them, and a certain great champion, named Orkning, who was the brother of Kostbera.

So folk followed them down to the ships, and all letted them of their journey, but attained to naught therein.

Then spake Glaumvor, and said—

"O Vingi, most like that great ill hap will come of thy coming, and mighty and evil things shall betide in thy travelling."

He answered, "Hearken to my answer; that I lie not aught; and may the high gallows and all things of grame (evil) have me, if I lie one word!"

Then cried Kostbera, "Fare ye well with merry days."

And Hogni answered, "Be glad of heart, howsoever it may fare with us!"

And therewith they parted, each to their own fate. Then away they rowed, so hard and fast, that well-nigh the half of the keel slipped away from the ship, and so hard they laid on to the oars that thole and gunwale brake.

But when they came aland they made their ship fast, and then they rode awhile on their noble steeds through the murk wild-wood.

And now they behold the king's army, and huge uproar, and the clatter of weapons they hear from thence; and they see there a mighty host of men, and the manifold array of them, even as they wrought there; and all the gates of the burg were full of men.

So they rode up to the burg, and the gates thereof were shut; then Hogni brake open the gates, and therewith they ride into the burg.

Then spake Vingi, "Well might ye have left this deed undone; go to, now, bide ye here while I go seek your

gallows-tree! Softly and sweetly I bade you hither, but an evil thing abode thereunder; short while to bide ere ye are tied up to that same tree!"

Hogni answered, "None the more shall we waver for that cause; for little methinks have we shrunk aback whenas men fell to fight; and naught shall it avail thee to make us afraid,—and for an ill fate hast thou wrought."

And therewith they cast him down to earth, and smote him with their axe-hammers till he died.

37.—THE BATTLE IN THE BURG OF KING ATLI.

THEN they rode unto the king's hall, and King Atli arrayed his host for battle, and the ranks were so set forth that a certain wall there was betwixt them and the brethren.

"Welcome hither," said he. "Deliver unto me that plenteous gold which is mine of right; even the wealth which Sigurd once owned, and which is now Gudrun's of right."

Gunnar answered, "Never gettest thou that wealth; and men of might must thou meet here, or ever we lay by life if thou wilt deal with us in battle; ah, belike thou settest forth this feast like a great man, and wouldst not hold thine hand from erne and wolf!"

"Long ago I had it in my mind," said Atli, "to take the lives of you, and be lord of the gold, and reward you for that deed of shame, wherein ye beguiled the best of all your affinity; but now shall I revenge him."

Hogni answered, "Little will it avail to lie long brooding over that rede, leaving the work undone."

And therewith they fell to hard fighting.

But therewithal came the tidings to Gudrun, and when she heard thereof she grew exceeding wroth, and cast her mantle from her, and ran out and greeted those newcomers, and kissed her brethren, and showed them all love, —and the last of all greetings was that betwixt them.

Then said she, "I thought I had set forth counsels whereby ye should not come hither, but none may deal with his shapen fate." And withal she said, "Will it avail aught to seek for peace?"

But stoutly and grimly they said nay thereto. So she sees that the game goeth sorely against her brethren, and she gathers to her great stoutness of heart, and does on her a mail-coat and takes to her a sword, and fights by her brethren, and goes as far forward as the bravest of manfolk: and all spoke in one wise that never saw any fairer defence than in her.

Now the men fell thick, and far before all others was the fighting of those brethren, and the battle endured a long while unto midday; Gunnar and Hogni went right through the folk of Atli, and so tells the tale that all the mead ran red with blood, the sons of Hogni withal set on stoutly.

Then spake Atli the king, "A fair host and a great have we, and mighty champions withal, and yet have many of us fallen, and but evil am I apaid in that nineteen of my champions are slain, and but six left alive."

And therewithal was there a lull in the battle.

Then spake Atli the king, "Four brethren were we, and now am I left alone; great affinity I gat to me, and deemed my fortune well sped thereby; a wife I had, fair and wise, high of mind, and great of heart; but no joyance may I have of her wisdom, for little peace is betwixt us,—but ye—ye have slain many of my kin, and beguiled me of realm and riches, and for the greatest of all woes have slain my sister withal."

Quoth Hogni, "Why babblest thou thus? thou wert the first to break the peace. Thou didst take my kinswoman and pine her to death by hunger, and didst murder her, and take her wealth; an ugly deed for a king!—meet for mocking and laughter I deem it, that thou must needs make long tale of thy woes; rather will I give thanks to the Gods that thou fallest into ill."

38.—OF THE SLAYING OF THE GJUKINGS.

Now King Atli eggs on his folk to set on fiercely, and eagerly they fight; but the Gjukings fell on so hard that King Atli gave back into the hall, and within doors was the fight, and fierce beyond all fights.

That battle was the death of many a man, but such was the ending thereof, that there fell all the folk of those brethren, and they twain alone stood up on their feet, and yet many more must fare to hell first before their weapons.

And now they fell on Gunnar the king, and because of the host of men that set on him was hand laid on him, and he was cast into fetters; afterwards fought Hogni, with the stoutest heart and the greatest manlihood; and

he felled to earth twenty of the stoutest of the champions of King Atli, and many he thrust into the fire that burnt amidst the hall, and all were of one accord that such a man might scarce be seen; yet in the end was he borne down by many and taken.

Then said King Atli, "A marvellous thing how many men have gone their ways before him! Cut the heart from out of him, and let that be his bane!"

Hogni said, "Do according to thy will; merrily will I abide whatso thou wilt do against me; and thou shalt see that my heart is not afraid, for hard matters have I made trial of ere now, and all things that may try a man was I fain to bear, whiles yet I was unhurt; but now sorely am I hurt, and thou alone henceforth will bear mastery in our dealings together."

Then spake a counsellor of King Atli, "Better rede I see thereto; take we the thrall Hjalli, and give respite to Hogni; for this thrall is made to die, since the longer he lives the less worth shall he be."

The thrall hearkened, and cried out aloft, and fled away anywhither where he might hope for shelter, crying out that a hard portion was his because of their strife and wild doings, and an ill day for him whereon he must be dragged to death from his sweet life and his swine-keeping. But they caught him, and turned a knife against him, and he yelled and screamed or ever he felt the point thereof.

Then in such wise spake Hogni as a man seldom speaketh who is fallen into hard need, for he prayed for the thrall's life, and said that these shrieks he could not

away with, and that it were a lesser matter to him to play out the play to the end; and therewithal the thrall gat his life as for that time; but Gunnar and Hogni are both laid in fetters. Then spake King Atli with Gunnar the king, and bade him tell concerning the gold, and where it was, if he would have his life.

But he answered, "Nay, first will I behold the bloody head of Hogni, my brother."

So now they caught hold of the thrall again, and cut the heart from out of him, and bore it unto King Gunnar, but he said—

"The faint heart of Hjalli may ye here behold, little like the proud heart of Hogni, for as much as it trembleth now, more by the half it trembled whenas it lay in the breast of him."

So now they fell on Hogni even as Atli urged them, and cut the heart from out of him, but such was the might of his manhood, that he laughed while he abode that torment, and all wondered at his worth, and in perpetual memory is it held since.

Then they showed it to Gunnar, and he said—

"The mighty heart of Hogni, little like the faint heart of Hjalli, for little as it trembleth now, less it trembled whenas in his breast it lay! But now, O Atli, even as we die so shalt thou die; and lo; I alone wot where the gold is, nor shall Hogni be to tell thereof now; to and fro played the matter in my mind whiles we both lived, but now have I myself determined for myself, and the Rhine river shall rule over the gold, rather than that the Huns shall bear it on the hands of them."

Then said King Atli, "Have away the bondsman;" and so they did.

But Gudrun called to her men, and came to Atli, and said—

"May it fare ill with thee now and from henceforth, even as thou hast ill held to thy word with me!"

So Gunnar was cast into a worm-close (snake-pen), and many worms abode him there, and his hands were fast bound; but Gudrun sent him a harp, and in such wise did he set forth his craft, that wisely he smote the harp, smiting it with his toes, and so excellently well he played, that few deemed they had heard such playing, even when the hand had done it. And with such might and power he played, that all the worms fell asleep in the end, save one adder only, great and evil of aspect, that crept unto him and thrust his sting into him until it smote his heart; and in such wise with great hardihood he ended his life days.

39.—THE END OF ATLI AND HIS KIN AND FOLK.

Now thought Atli the King that he had gained a mighty victory, and spake to Gudrun even as mocking her greatly, or as making himself great before her. "Gudrun," saith he, "thus hast thou lost thy brethren, and thy very self hast brought it about."

She answers, "In good liking livest thou, whereas thou thrustest these slayings before me, but mayhappen thou wilt rue it, when thou hast tried what is to come hereafter; and of all I have, the longest-lived matter shall be the memory of thy cruel heart, nor shall it go well with thee whiles I live."

He answered and said, "Let there be peace betwixt us; I will atone for thy brethren with gold and dear-bought things, even as thy heart may wish."

She answers, "Hard for a long while have I been in our dealings together, and now I say, that while Hogni was yet alive thou mightest have brought it to pass; but now mayest thou never atone for my brethren in my heart; yet oft must we women be overborne by the might of you men; and now are all my kindred dead and gone, and thou alone art left to rule over me: wherefore now this is my counsel that we make a great feast, wherein I will hold the funeral of my brother and of thy kindred withal."

In such wise did she make herself soft and kind in words, though far other things forsooth lay thereunder, but he hearkened to her gladly, and trusted in her words, whereas she made herself sweet of speech.

So Gudrun held the funeral feast for her brethren, and King Atli for his men, and exceeding proud and great was this feast.

But Gudrun forgat not her woe, but brooded over it, how she might work some mighty shame against the king; and at nightfall she took to her the sons of King Atli and her as they played about the floor; the younglings waxed heavy of cheer, and asked what she would with them.

"Ask me not," she said; "ye shall die, the twain of you!"

Then they answered, "Thou mayest do with thy children even as thou wilt, nor shall any hinder thee, but shame there is to thee in the doing of this deed."

Yet for all that she cut the throats of them.

Then the king asked where his sons were, and Gudrun answered, "I will tell thee, and gladden thine heart by the telling; lo now, thou didst make a great woe spring up for me in the slaying of my brethren; now hearken and hear my rede and my deed; thou hast lost thy sons, and their heads are become beakers on the board here, and thou thyself hast drunken the blood of them blended with wine; and their hearts I took and roasted them on a spit, and thou hast eaten thereof."

King Atli answered, "Grim art thou in that thou hast murdered thy sons, and given me their flesh to eat, and little space passes betwixt ill deed of thine and ill deed."

Gudrun said, "My heart is set on the doing to thee of as great shame as may be; never shall the measure of ill be full to such a king as thou art."

The king said, "Worser deeds hast thou done than men have to tell of, and great unwisdom is there in such fearful redes; most meet art thou to be burned on bale when thou hast first been smitten to death with stones, for in such wise wouldst thou have what thou hast gone a weary way to seek."

She answered, "Thine own death thou foretellest, but another death is fated for me."

And many other words they spake in their wrath.

Now Hogni had a son left alive, hight Niblung, and great wrath of heart he bare against King Atli; and he did Gudrun to wit that he would avenge his father. And she took his words well, and they fell to counsel together

thereover, and she said it would be great goodhap if it might be brought about.

So on a night, when the king had drunken, he gat him to bed, and when he was laid asleep, thither to him came Gudrun and the son of Hogni.

Gudrun took a sword and thrust it through the breast of King Atli, and they both of them set their hands to the deed, both she and the son of Hogni.

Then Atli the king awoke with the wound, and cried out, "No need of binding or salving here!—who art thou who hast done the deed?"

Gudrun says, "Somewhat have I, Gudrun, wrought therein, and somewhat withal the son of Hogni."

Atli said, "Ill it beseemed to thee to do this, though somewhat of wrong was between us; for thou were wedded to me by the rede of thy kin, and dower paid I for thee; yea, thirty goodly knights, and seemly maidens, and many men besides; and yet wert thou not content, but if thou shouldst rule over the lands King Budli owned; and thy mother-in-law full oft thou lettest sit a-weeping."

Gudrun said, "Many false words hast thou spoken, and of naught I account them; oft, indeed, was I fell of mood, but much didst thou add thereto. Full oft in this thy house did frays befall, and kin fought kin, and friend fought friend, and made themselves big one against the other; better days had I whenas I abode with Sigurd, when we slew kings, and took their wealth to us, but gave peace to whomso would, and the great men laid themselves under our hands, and might we gave to him of them who would have it; then I lost him, and a little

thing was it that I should bear a widow's name, but the greatest of griefs that I should come to thee—I who had aforetime the noblest of all kings, while for thee, thou never barest out of the battle aught but the worser lot."

King Atli answered, "Naught true are thy words, nor will this our speech better the lot of either of us, for all is fallen now to naught; but now do to me in seemly wise, and array my dead corpse in noble fashion."

"Yea, that will I," she says, "and let make for thee a goodly grave, and build for thee a worthy abiding place of stone, and wrap thee in fair linen, and care for all that needful is."

So therewithal he died, and she did according to her word: and then they cast fire into the hall.

And when the folk and men of estate awoke amid that dread and trouble, naught would they abide the fire, but smote each the other down, and died in such wise; so there Atli the king, and all his folk, ended their life-days. But Gudrun had no will to live longer after this deed so wrought, but nevertheless her ending day was not yet come upon her.

Now the Volsungs and the Gjukings, as folk tell in tale, have been the greatest-hearted and the mightiest of all men, as ye may well behold written in the songs of old time.

But now with the tidings just told were these troubles stayed.

40.—HOW GUDRUN CAST HERSELF INTO THE SEA, BUT WAS BROUGHT ASHORE AGAIN.

GUDRUN had a daughter by Sigurd hight Swanhild; she was the fairest of all women, eager-eyed as her father, so that few durst look under the brows of her; and as far did she excel other woman-kind as the sun excels the other lights of heaven.

But on a day went Gudrun down to the sea, and caught up stones in her arms, and went out into the sea, for she had will to end her life. But mighty billows drave her forth along the sea, and by means of their upholding was she borne along till she came at the last to the burg of King Jonakr, a mighty king, and lord of many folk. And he took Gudrun to wife, and their children were Hamdir, and Sorli, and Erp; and there was Swanhild nourished withal.

41.—OF THE WEDDING AND SLAYING OF SWANHILD.

JORMUNREK was the name of a mighty king of those days, and his son was called Randver. Now this king called his son to talk with him, and said, "Thou shalt fare on an errand of mine to King Jonakr, with my counsellor Bikki, for with King Jonakr is nourished Swanhild, the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane; and I know for sure that she is the fairest maid dwelling under the sun of this world; her above all others would I have to my wife, and thou shalt go woo her for me."

Randver answered, "Meet and right, fair lord, that I should go on thine errands."

So the king set forth this journey in seemly wise, and they fare till they come to King Jonakr's abode, and behold Swanhild, and have many thoughts concerning the treasure of her goodliness.

But on a day Randver called the king to talk with him, and said, "Jormunrek the King would fain be thy brother-in-law, for he has heard tell of Swanhild, and his desire it is to have her to wife, nor may it be shown that she may be given to any mightier man than he is one."

The king says, "This is an alliance of great honour, for a man of fame he is."

Gudrun says, "A wavering trust, the trust in luck that it change not!"

Yet because of the king's furthering, and all the matters that went herewith, is the wooing accomplished; and Swanhild went to the ship with a goodly company, and sat in the stern beside the king's son.

Then spake Bikki to Randver, "How good and right it were if thou thyself had to wife so lovely a woman rather than the old man there."

Good seemed that word to the heart of the king's son, and he spake to her with sweet words, and she to him in like wise.

So they came aland and go unto the king, and Bikki said unto him, "Meet and right it is, lord, that thou shouldst know what is befallen, though hard it be to tell of, for the tale must be concerning thy beguiling, whereas thy son has gotten to him the full love of Swanhild, nor is she other than his harlot; but thou, let not the deed be unavenged."

Now many an ill rede had he given the king or this, but of all his ill redes did this sting home the most; and still would the king hearken to all his evil redes; wherefore he, who might nowise still the wrath within him, cried out that Randver should be taken and tied up to the gallows-tree.

And as he was led to the gallows he took his hawk and plucked the feathers from off it, and bade show it to his father; and when the king saw it, then he said, "Now may folk behold that he deemeth my honour to be gone away from me, even as the feathers of this hawk;" and therewith he bade deliver him from the gallows.

But in that while had Bikki wrought his will, and Randver was dead-slain.

And, moreover, Bikki spake, "Against none hast thou more wrongs to avenge thee of than against Swanhild; let her die a shameful death."

"Yea," said the king, "we will do after thy counsel."

So she was bound in the gate of the burg, and horses were driven at her to tread her down; but when she opened her eyes wide, then the horses durst not trample her; so when Bikki beheld that, he bade draw a bag over the head of her; and they did so, and therewith she lost her life.[1]

[1]In the prose Edda the slaying of Swanhild is a spontaneous and sudden act on the part of the king. As he came back from hunting one day, there sat Swanhild washing her linen, and it came into the king's mind how that she was the cause of all his woe, so he and his men rode over her and slew her.—*Tr.*

42.—GUDRUN SENDS HER SONS TO AVENGE SWANHILD.

Now Gudrun heard of the slaying of Swanhild, and spake to her sons, "Why sit ye here in peace amid merry words, whereas Jormunrek hath slain your sister, and trodden her under foot of horses in shameful wise? No heart ye have in you like to Gunnar or Hogni; verily they would have avenged their kinswoman!"

Hamdir answered, "Little didst thou praise Gunnar and Hogni, whereas they slew Sigurd, and thou wert reddened in the blood of him, and ill were thy brethren avenged by the slaying of thine own sons; yet not so ill a deed were it for us to slay King Jormunrek, and so hard thou pushest us on to this that we may naught abide thy hard words."

Gudrun went about laughing now, and gave them to drink from mighty beakers, and thereafter she got for them great byrnies and good, and all other weed[1] of war.

Then spake Hamdir, "Lo now, this is our last parting, for thou shalt hear tidings of us, and drink one grave-ale[2] over us and over Swanhild."

So therewith they went their ways.

But Gudrun went unto her bower, with heart swollen with sorrow, and spake—

"To three men was I wedded, and first to Sigurd Fafnir's-bane, and he was bewrayed and slain, and of all griefs was that the greatest grief. Then was I given to King Atli, and so fell was my heart toward him that I slew in the fury of my grief his children and mine. Then

[1]Weed (A.S. *wecdo*), clothing.
[2]Grave-ale, burial-feast.

gave I myself to the sea, but the billows thereof cast me out aland, and to this king then was I given; then gave I Swanhild away out of the land with mighty wealth; and lo my next greatest sorrow after Sigurd, for under horses' feet was she trodden and slain; but the grimmest and ugliest of woes was the casting of Gunnar into the Worm-close, and the hardest was the cutting of Hogni's heart from him.

"Ah, better would it be if Sigurd came to meet me, and I went my ways with him, for here bideth now behind with me neither son nor daughter to comfort me. Oh, mindest thou not, Sigurd, the words we spoke when we went into one bed together, that thou wouldst come and look on me; yea, even from thine abiding place among the dead?"

And thus had the words of her sorrow an end.

43.—THE LATTER END OF ALL THE KIN OF THE GJUKINGS.

Now telleth the tale concerning the sons of Gudrun, that she had arrayed their war-raiment in such wise, that no steel would bite thereon; and she bade them play not with stones or other heavy matters, for that it would be to their scathe if they did so.

And now, as they went on their way, they met Erp, their brother, and asked him in what wise he would help them.

He answered, "Even as hand helps hand, or foot helps foot."

But that they deemed naught at all, and slew him there and then. Then they went their ways, nor was it long or

ever Hamdir stumbled, and thrust down his hand to steady himself, and spake therewith—

"Naught but a true thing spake Erp, for now should I have fallen, had not hand been to steady me."

A little after Sorli stumbled, but turned about on his feet, and so stood, and spake—

"Yea now had I fallen, but that I steadied myself with both feet."

And they said they had done evilly with Erp their brother.

But on they fare till they come to the abode of King Jormunrek, and they went up to him and set on him forthwith, and Hamdir cut both hands from him and Sorli both feet. Then spake Hamdir—

"Off were the head if Erp were alive; our brother, whom we slew on the way, and found out our deed too late." Even as the Song says—

> Off were the head
> If Erp were alive yet,
> Our brother the bold,
> Whom we slew by the way,
> The well-famed in warfare.

Now in this must they turn away from the words of their mother, whereas they had to deal with stones. For now men fell on them, and they defended themselves in good and manly wise, and were the scathe of many a man, nor would iron bite on them.

But there came thereto a certain man, old of aspect and one-eyed,[1] and he spake—

[1]Odin; he ends the tale as he began it.

"No wise men are ye, whereas ye cannot bring these men to their end."

Then the king said, "Give us rede thereto, if thou canst."

He said, "Smite them to the death with stones."

In such wise was it done, for the stones flew thick and fast from every side, and that was the end of their life-days.

And now has come to an end the whole root and stem of the Gjukings.[1]

NOW MAY ALL EARLS
BE BETTERED IN MIND,
MAY THE GRIEF OF ALL MAIDENS
EVER BE MINISHED,
FOR THIS TALE OF TROUBLE
SO TOLD TO ITS ENDING.

[1] "And now," etc., inserted by translators from the prose Edda; the stanza at the end from the Whetting of Gudrun.

LEGEND OF THE

WAGNER TRILOGY.

BY

JESSIE L. WESTON.

Chapter I.

THE NIBELUNGEN RING.

[In adapting the Nibelung Legend to operatic treatment Wagner has made use of the license that is legitimately granted to the dramatist, and therein he exhibits several departures from the story as told in the Volsunga Saga. But his discriminations are never disfigured with inconsistencies. Moreover, the famous composer ever manifests critical literary judgment throughout, and a just regard for proportions and congruities in the argument upon which his trilogy is based. For it must be understood that, like all ancient and very popular tales, The Nibelungen-lied has many versions, in which while the main thread is preserved, material variations are discoverable. Wagner therefore has exercised the justified privilege of using material from not only all the several versions of the legend but also borrowed from Norse Mythology such incidents as have a bearing upon the tale and then, like a great master, he blended the whole into a harmonious story, in design, texture and color, that age nor study cannot divest of ever living interest.—*Editor.*]

In the study of the legends which lie at the basis of the series of immortal works which the genius of Richard Wagner has bequeathed to the world, we should place in the forefront the great Siegfried legend, the primæval heritage of the German people. For, in spite of the fascinating garb in which, through the darkness of the long

Northern nights and sunless Northern days, the skill of Icelandic bards has clothed the story, the home of the legend was originally the home of the German Folk, the Rhine-land.

How old the legend is we cannot tell; we only know that it comes to us fraught with dim reminiscences and hints of a time when the worlds of sense and of spirit were not so far apart as now we hold them; when the gods, clad in the likeness of men, walked the earth, and visibly turned and guided as they would the lives of mortals; a time when the sons of God beheld the daughters of men, and saw that they were fair. What wonder, then, if the threads of a web woven so long ago have become torn and tangled by time, if here and there we find rents in the fabric, and the original design baffles our scrutiny. But it is a goodly fabric still, and the colours are fair to look on, and the waving lines of the pattern enchain our fancy, even if we cannot tell where in old time they began, or how, in truth, they ended.

The myth which took form and shape on German soil was originally, in part at least, brought by them from the common cradle of their race, the home of the Aryan people. How early it assumed its distinctive form we cannot now tell; but this we may look upon as certain, that, originally mythical, and dealing with the life and death of a mythical hero, it was well known and popular by the fifth century; and that shortly after that date it became modified by the introduction of an element distinctly historical, and based on the events of the latter half of that century. The causes which led to this amplification of

the original legend are still a matter of speculation, but all are agreed that in the latter part of the Siegfried story, as it now stands, we have a reminiscence of the defeat and destruction of the Burgundian kingdom by the Huns A. D. 437; and of the death of Attila on the night of his marriage with Ildico, A. D. 453.

When we remember the terrifying effect produced by the incursions of Attila and his savage warriors, the dread with which they were regarded as instruments of Divine wrath rather than as mere men of predatory instincts, a dread which has been embodied in Attila's well-known title of "The Scourge of God," and the abrupt closing of his career by a death as sudden and mysterious as his life had been brilliant and awe-inspiring,—we can only find it natural that such a character should have become, not merely a striking historical personality, but a legendary hero; that he became, and that in so short a period after his death, an integral part of an already existing and immensely popular legend, is a more striking proof of the effect produced by Attila on the popular mind than any outside historical testimony can afford.

As remarked above, the causes which led to Attila's absorption into the legend are difficult to determine; we cannot securely base an argument on mere similarity of names—in the early records of all peoples, history and legend are so closely intertwined; but it is worthy of note that the roll of the Burgundian kings includes the names of Gibica, Gundohar, Godomar, and Gislahar—names which accord too strongly with the varying forms found in the legend for the resemblance to be merely acciden-

tal, though at this distance of time it is impossible to say whether legend borrowed from history, or history filled up gaps in its roll by borrowing from legend. That the names accorded independently, and that there was originally a *legendary* Gunther, whose personality became merged in that of the *historical* Gunther, as some critics maintain, seems scarcely probable. It is most likely that the story in its simple and primæval form ended with Siegfried's death, and that as time went on the people became dissatisfied with a conclusion which in their eyes lacked justice; the treacherous murder of one so young, so brilliant, and beautiful as the hero is always represented, demanded vengeance—Attila's death, really due to natural causes, was by many ascribed to his wife, an act of vengeance on her part for the murder of her father by the Huns; her name, Ildico, recalled the Grimhild, or Hilda, of the legend; and to the introduction of this *Rache-motif* we very likely owe the development of the legend, and its blending of legendary and historical events—the vengeance worked out by a woman's unrelenting hatred, involving alike the murderers of Siegfried and the instrument of their punishment, Attila. The total destruction of the Burgundian power would naturally make a strong impression on the neighbours of the vanquished people, and it is easy to understand how the (historically unimportant) father of Ildico became replaced in popular imagination by the Burgundian kings, whose overthrow might very well demand vengeance. If there really were, as in the case of Ildico, whom we know to be historical, a similarity between the names of the

actors in the legendary and the historical drama, the temptation to weld the two into one would become irresistable; and though, of course, it is impossible to speak with certainty, the hypothesis that the moulding of the Siegfried legend into its final and completed form was due to these influences, is at least intelligible and worthy of consideration.

In any case, this union between legend and history took place soon after the death of Attila, for the story, in this form, travelled North probably not later than the sixth century. Here, among the Scandinavian peoples, it found a congenial home, and became enshrined in a number of songs or lays, preserved in the Icelandic Eddas to this day. Out of these songs, and others now lost, an unknown compiler, in the twelfth century, constructed the *Volsunga-saga,* a prose recital of the origin and deeds of the race of the Volsungs, of which race Sigurd is the last and greatest hero. The story has, of course, undergone considerable modification by transmission from its original German home, and many of its special features are undoubtedly due to Northern influence, but it retains, far more strongly than the other versions, the mythical element undoubtedly present in the original story, and, on the whole, it may be considered as giving the oldest, as it certainly does the most complete and poetical, form of the legend. We also possess another Northern version, of somewhat later date, the *Thidrek-saga* (so called because its main object is the recital of the deeds of Thidrek of Bern), compiled probably by an Icelandic scribe in the middle of the thirteenth century; but inasmuch as the ver-

sion given is based avowedly on German, and especially on Saxon, tradition, it represents the *German* rather than the *Scandinavian* form of the story. In this light, considering the fact that the legend is admittedly of German origin, the Thidrek-saga is especially valuable; and though, as a whole, the atmosphere of the story is more mediæval and less primitive than that of the Volsunga-saga, in certain details, which will be noted in their place, it seems to have preserved more faithfully the original form of the legend.

But even in its original German home the legend became in process of time much modified, as in the form of lays, sung or recited by wandering minstrels, it passed from one generation to another, till finally, in the latter half of the twelfth century, these scattered songs gradually assumed a connected form; or were taken, by some unknown poet, as the basis for the construction of a connected version of the legend (both of these theories find their adherents among the critics); and in their final shape as the *Nibelungen-lied,* have won a permanent place in literature, as the national epic of Germany. In this, as it must be considered, latest form of the legend the character of the story has greatly altered; the mythical element has entirely disappeared; the earlier incidents of the hero's story have been in part forgotten, in part passed lightly over; and all the interest is concentrated on that portion of Siegfried's career which connects him with the Burgundian Rhine kings; while the final scenes of the story, and the vengeance for Siegfried's death, take up more than one-half of the entire poem. The whole

atmosphere, too, is absolutely mediæval, stamped throughout with the impress of the feudal spirit, with the fullest recognition of the bond existing between king and vassal, master and man; while the importance of the *rôle* assigned to Hagen, and the stern grandeur of his character, practically lift him to the level of Siegfried, and divide the poem into two parts, Siegfried being the hero of one, Hagen of the other.

With the Nibelungen-lied the legend may be held to have reached its full development. True, the remembrance of the hero lived, and still lives on, enshrined in many varying forms; in the Folk-songs of Denmark and the Färöe Isles (in the latter curiously little altered); in German Volksbücher, and the works of the Meistersingers; and even to our own day, much distorted, but clearly recognisable, in current fairy tales. But for an understanding of the original form of the legend, so far as we can apprehend it, we do not need more than a careful study of the three main streams of tradition here mentioned, and it is in these three versions that we must seek for the explanation of the particular form into which Wagner cast his drama of the Nibelungen Ring.

THE THIDREK-SAGA.

(This version of the legend, though evidently following in many particulars the source of the Volsunga-saga, or it may be the Volsunga-saga itself, yet differs from it in many important particulars, the most essential difference being in the account of Sigurd's birth and bringing

up.) This is the account given by the Thidrek-saga:— There was a king named Sigmund, who had wedded Sisibe, the daughter of Nodung, King of Spain. Shortly after his marriage, Sigmund left his kingdom to go to the aid of his brother-in-law, who would fight against Pulinenland.

Now Sigmund left his kingdom and his wife in the care of two of his nobles, Herman and Artwin, but these two were traitors, who would fain win the love of the queen for themselves; and when she would not listen, they cast about in their minds how they might escape the wrath of King Sigmund, for they feared lest the queen should tell him of their ill-doings. So when Sigmund returned, the two nobles rode to meet him, and accused the queen of a guilty passion for her serving-man; and Sigmund, in his anger, bade them take the queen to a lonely wood, and there cut out her tongue, and leave her to perish. Then Sisibe, thinking that her husband had sent for her, rode with the two traitors into the forest; but when Artwin would have carried out the king's command, Herman took pity on her innocence and beauty, and would do her no harm.

So the two fought; and as they fought, the queen, in her terror, gave birth to a son, and she laid the babe in a glass casket she was bearing with her. Now Herman got the better of the fight, and Artwin fell at the queen's feet, and in his death-agony he struck the casket, and it fell down the bank into the river, and was borne away on the current, and when the queen saw that the babe was lost, so great was her sickness and her terror that she fell dead.

The river bare the casket towards the sea, and it was ebb-tide, and the casket smote against the rocks and broke, and the babe lay and wept bitterly. There came a hind out of the wood, and she came to the child and bare it in her mouth to her lair, and suckled the babe with her own fawns, and the boy grew tall and strong.

Now, there was a cunning smith named Mimir, and he had a brother Regin, who, because of his skill in magic and his evil deeds, had been changed into a dragon, and dwelt in a forest, and dealt death to all who came in his way, saving his brother alone. Now, one day Mimir was burning charcoal in the wood, when a naked child came out of the bushes and ran up to him; it was a fair boy, and well grown, but unable to speak; and as Mimir caressed the boy, a hind came out of the wood and came to the child and licked him all over. So Mimir knew this was a strayed babe whom the beast had nourished; and having no child, he took him home and gave him the name of Sigfrid, and brought him up as his foster-son. But Sigfrid grew up of a fierce and unruly nature, and he ill-treated the other lads who came to learn of Mimir, and Mimir's serving-men, till they all feared him exceedingly. Nor was he better at smithying, for when Mimir sent him to the forge he smote so hard that he split the anvil in two and brake the tongs. Then Mimir sent him forth to the wood to burn charcoal for him, and gave him provisions for nine days, and told Regin of his coming, for he hoped the dragon would slay Sigfrid. But when the dragon came against him, Sigfrid snatched a tree-trunk out of the fire, and beat the dragon on the head with the

burning wood till he had slain him. And with that he was hungry, for he had eaten all his food at one meal, and he cut up the dragon and put the flesh in his kettle; and he put his hand in to try if it were cooked, and his hand was scalded, and he put it to his lips; and when he tasted of the blood of the dragon, he understood the voice of the birds, and he heard how they spake of Mimir's treachery, and how the dragon was Mimir's brother. Then Sigfrid took the blood of the dragon, and wherever it touched his skin, the skin became hard like horn. So he stripped off his clothes, and bathed himself in the blood and his skin was as horn all over, save between his shoulders, where he could not reach; then he did on his clothes again and went homeward, bearing the head of the dragon in his hands. When his companions saw him they were terrified, and fled to the woods and hid themselves; but Mimir spoke gently to him, and offered him a suit of armour and a sword, and bade him go to Brynhild's palace and ask of her the horse Grani. Then Sigfrid smote off Mimir's head with his sword, and went on his way to Brynhild's palace; and when he came to Seegard, he burst open the doors, and slew seven warders and seven knights who would forbid his entry, and made his way to Brynhild's chamber. The maiden welcomed him kindly, and told him of his parentage, which before he knew not, and bade him take the horse Grani; and Sigfrid rode forth to King Isung of Bertangaland, and became his standard-bearer. (It appears later on that at this first meeting Sigfrid and Brynhild plight their troth to each other, but the saga-writer does not record it.

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HEIMER AND ASLOG

(After the painting by G. C. Kruskowski)

THE story of Aslog in many respects bears a resemblance to that of Mignon, notably in her wanderings under the protection of an aged minstrel. The original conceit that imparts to Aslog an interest that it were heresy to borrow, is the means by which she was concealed by the old harper, whose love is made a touching tribute to fidelity and helpfulness. The artist whose exquisite creation is herewith reproduced, has given a feeling portrayal of the subject by introducing in the background the misty figure of a guardian angel, or the spirit of a mother, who speaks encouragement by wind-swept harp melodies, to which Aslog gives surprised attention.

After Sigfrid's coming to King Isung we have a full account of the arms and appearance of the twelve companions of Thidrek (Dietrich) von Bern, of their fight with King Isung, his eleven sons and standard-bearer, Sigfrid, which leads up to the arrival of the latter with Thidrek, Gunther, and Hagen at Worms, and the taking up once more of the thread of Sigfrid's story.) Now Aldrian was king of Nibelungenland, and he had four sons—Gunther, Hagen, Gernoz, and Gislher—and one daughter, Grimhild; but though all men thought Hagen the son of Aldrian, he was in truth the son of an elf, who had come to Queen Oda as she lay asleep in a garden; and his countenance was pale as ashes, and his face terrible to look upon; moreover, he had but one eye. And Sigfrid wedded Grimhild, and ruled over half of the kingdom; and the Niblungs were accounted great heroes, and feared by all. Then Sigfrid said to Gunther that it would be well if he should marry Brynhild, and that he would guide him to her palace, and Gunther thought it good; so they came to the palace of Brynhild, who welcomed them all save Sigfrid, and him she would not welcome because he had taken a wife. Then Brynhild asked Sigfrid why he had broken his vows to her, and Sigfrid said that she had no brother, and he deemed it wiser to marry the sister of a mighty king, such as Gunther, than to marry her.[1] Then Brynhild said, since better might not be, she would wed Gunther; but on the marriage night she would treat him in no way as her husband, and

[1]It will be seen here that there is no suggestion of magic influence; Sigfrid's conduct is determined by motives of self-interest entirely.

when he would have forced her to yield to him, she bound him hand and foot with her girdle, and hung him to the wall, and so she did the second and third nights. Gunther spoke of his grief to Sigfrid, and Sigfrid told him that so long as Brynhild was a maiden, a man might hardly overcome her. So Sigfrid, at Gunther's wish, clad himself in Gunther's clothes, and took his place in the marriage-chamber; and when Brynhild would have treated him as aforetime, he wrestled with her and overcame her, and took from her her maiden-hood, and took the gold ring from off her finger and gave it to Grimhild; but Brynhild thought it had been Gunther. (The saga does not say how long they dwell in peace together; but, as in all the versions, the *dénouement* is brought about by Brynhild's contemptuous treatment of her sister-in-law, which provokes Grimhild to retaliate by revealing the secret intrusted to her.) Brynhild was very wrathful, and she went out to meet her husband and Hagen as they returned from hunting, and prayed of them to slay Sigfrid; and inasmuch as Gunther deemed that Sigfrid had won to himself too much power, he promised that it should be as she willed. So they proclaimed a great hunting, and Hagen bade the cook salt well their food, and give them but little to drink, and so it was done; and when the heroes would quench their thirst at a brook, Gunther and Hagen drank first, and as Sigfrid bent down to drink, Hagen smote him with a spear in his back, and so he died. Then they lifted his dead body on his horse and went homeward; and Brynhild met them, and said it was a fair hunting, and bade them

bring the body to Grimhild; and they burst open the doors of Grimhild's chamber, and laid the body in the bed beside her. Then Grimhild awoke; and when she saw the wound in Sigfrid's back, and that neither helmet nor shield were smitten, she knew he had been slain by treachery. Hagen said a wild boar had slain him; but Grimhild answered, "That wild boar wast thou, Hagen."

King Attila of Susa hearing that Sigfrid was dead, and being himself a widower, sent messengers to ask the hand of Grimhild, though his wife Erka had prayed him not to wed a wife of the Niblungs, lest it be to the ruin of him and his folk. Now Grimhild, knowing Attila was a mighty king, was willing to wed him, for she thought she might so avenge the death of Sigfrid. And after seven years she prayed him to send for her brothers to his land, and told him of the great treasure which Sigfrid had won from the dragon (this is the first notice we have of the Hoard in the Thidrek-saga), and Attila, who was greedy of gold, was willing to ask them. But Hagen spake to Gunther, and warned him that Grimhild had evil thoughts in her heart; and Queen Oda dreamt ill dreams, and would have kept her sons back from the journey, but Gunther was bent on going, so the Niblungs set forth with one thousand men. When they came to where the Rhine and the Danube meet, they had no boat to carry them over, and must camp for the night on the bank, and Hagen kept watch. He came on an inland water where certain water-maidens (*meer-frauen*) were bathing, and he took their clothes as pledges, and asked them where he could find a ship, and if their jour-

ney should be of good fortune; and the water-maidens told him of a ferryman near at hand, but said their journey should bring them ill-luck, and that none of the Niblungs should cross the stream again. Then Hagen slew them for their evil tidings, and found the ferryman, and gave him a gold ring to ferry them over; but when they had crossed the stream, he smote off the ferryman's head, lest he tell Attila they had crossed in battle array. Then they came to the land of the Margraf Rodingeir and he and his wife Gutelinda received them with all honour, and betrothed their daughter to Gislher, and gave rich gifts to all the heroes, and Rodingeir rode with them to Attila's court. Attila received the Niblungs well, and sent Thidrek von Bern (who is dwelling as an exile at Attila's court) to meet them; but Grimhild only asked if her brothers had brought the Niblung gold, and Hagen made her scornful answer; and when they asked Grimhild why she wept, she said it was for the death of Sigfrid. The next morning Thidrek warned Hagen that Grimhild meant evil towards them; and when she prayed the Niblungs to lay aside their armour for the feast, they would not.

Then Grimhild prayed Thidrek to avenge her of her wrongs, and he would not, but Irung promised to fight for her. When they were seated at the feast, the queen sent her young son, and bade him smite Hagen in the face, and Hagen struck off the child's head, and so the fight began; and the Niblungs fought their way into the garden, but could not pass the gates, for Grimhild had bade them spread raw ox-hides without, so that the heroes

slipped and fell when they would pass through. All that day the Niblungs held the garden; but when night fell, Hagen bade them break down the wall, and they made their way into the streets, but their foes were so many that they beat them back. Then the Niblungs called on Thidrek von Bern to aid them; but since Attila was his host, he might not fight against him, but neither would he fight against the Niblungs. Then the Huns took Gunther captive and bound him, and cast him into the snake-tower, and he was stung to death; but Hagen fought his way to a hall in the palace, and Gislher and Gernoz followed him. Then Grimhild bade them set the hall on fire over Hagen's head; but as they might not slay him, or drive him out, Irung came against Hagen and wounded him, but Hagen cleft Irung in twain, and he fell, and the road where he fell is called Irung's Way to this day. (There seems to be a confusion with another Iring, after whom, some traditions say, the Milky Way was called Irings-strasse.) Markgraf Rodingeir saw that his friends were slain, and he was very wrathful, and came against the Niblungs, and they fought, and Gislher slew him. When Thidrek von Bern knew that Rodingeir was slain, he must needs avenge him; and he and Master Hildebrand came against the Niblungs, and Master Hildebrand felled Gernoz and Gislher, but Thidrek and Hagen fought long time before either would yield. Whereupon Thidrek grew so wrathful, that his breath was as flames of fire, and Hagen's armour grew hot upon him, till he could no longer bear it, and he yielded himself to Thidrek. (Thidrek's fiery breath is frequently referred to

in the sagas; it is a proof of his supposed demoniac origin.)

Then Grimhild took a fiery brand and thrust it into the mouths of Gernoz and Gislher, to see if they were dead, and Gernoz was dead, but Gislher was not before this, but the burning brand slew him. Now Thidrek deemed she was a devil, and not fit to live, and smote her asunder with his sword. And Hagen was so sorely wounded he might not live; but when he was dying he gave the keys of the cave where he had hidden the Niblung Treasure to the maiden who had tended him, and bade her give them to the son she should bear him. And she bare a son, and he grew up at Attila's court, and in due time she gave him the keys; and the lad spake to Attila, and promised him great riches if he would come with him to the cave. Then the king did so, and Hagen's son shut the door upon him, and laid rocks before it, and so Attila starved to death, and none has found the Treasure to this day.

It will be sufficient here to note the more important divergencies between this version and that of the Volsunga-saga; these are: The account of Siegfried's parentage, birth, and upbringing; his first meeting with Brynhild, and the circumstances under which he takes Gunther's place; his marriage with Grimhild, and his death. The birth of Hagen; the part played by Grimhild in the destruction of the Niblungs; and the complete change of "motif" in the latter part of the story—it is as murderers of Siegfried, not as possessors of the treasure, that they

are slain; the appearance of Thidrek von Bern; the hiding of the Niblung Hoard in a mountain cave instead of in the Rhine; and the circumstances attending the birth of Hagen's son and the death of Attila, though the "motif" for the latter is identical with that of the Volsunga-saga.

The most remarkable feature in the Nibelungen-lied is the ethical "motif" which has moulded the latter part of the story, the old German conception of "Treue" as faith and loyalty. Hagen slays Siegfried purely from loyalty to Brunhild, his liege lady; he goes to Etzel's court, knowing he is going to his death, through loyalty to Gunther, and defends his lord and his lord's secret to the last moment of his life. Gunther is, on his part, equally loyal to Hagen; he will not purchase his own safety by the sacrifice of his faithful vassal; and the character of the Margrave Rudiger, who prefers to die at the hands of the Nibelungs rather than break his vow to Kriemhild, or live knowing he has betrayed his friends, has often been held by critics to embody the most perfect type of mediæval chivalry. Kriemhild, too, repulsive as she becomes towards the end of the poem, is actuated throughout by her loyalty to Siegfried's memory. It is this ethical significance which forms the distinctive quality of the Nibelungen-lied, and entitles it, in spite of the revolting details of carnage and slaughter, to be considered as the finest literary presentation of the legend.

Chapter II.

THE RHINE-GOLD.

ARGUMENT.

The Rhine-gold, hidden 'neath the waters of the river, is watched by the three Rhine maidens—Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde. Wrought into a ring, the gold would bring universal dominion to its possessor; but none, save one who despises and forswears love, can weld it. The magic gold is stolen by force from the Rhine maidens by the Nibelung, Alberich, who has wooed them in vain, and they cry for help to Wotan.

But the gods themselves are in danger. Desirous of building a palace, they have called their foes, the giants, to their aid; as reward for their labour, Wotan, trusting to Loge's (Loke's) cunning to enable him to evade the promise, has agreed to deliver up Freia, the goddess of youth, whose loss will bring old age and decay upon the gods. The palace built, Fafner and Fasolt, the giants, demand their payment; and Loge, called upon for his promised aid, avows that though he has sought through Heaven and Earth, he can find naught that may be held as an equivalent for woman's worth and beauty. Then while the gods are in suspense, seeing no way out of the difficulty, he tells of the rape of the Rhine-gold, and how the magic ring has been wrought by Alberich, who hopes by its means to subdue all in Earth and Heaven to his will. The giants, between whom and the Nibelungs a feud has long existed, are greatly disturbed at the tidings, and finally announce that if the gods will win for them the Hoard of the Nibelungs, they will accept that as ransom for Freia, whom they hold as a pledge in the meantime.

Wotan and Loge therefore descend to Nibelheim, where, by the aid of the magic ring, Alberich is accumulating a vast hoard of treasure, and has further employed the skill of Mime to make for him a helmet, by the magic power of which he can change his shape, or become invisible at will. By Loge's cunning the gods succeed in binding the Nibelung, and refuse to loose him till he has paid over as ransom the entire Nibelung Hoard, together with helmet and ring. Deprived of this last, Alberich utters a curse upon all its future possessors; it shall

bring death and destruction to all alike, till it return once more to his keeping.

The giants, with Freia in their power, return to claim the promised ransom, and, thrusting their staves into the earth before the goddess, demand that the gold shall reach a height sufficient to conceal her from view; the helmet of magic is added to the pile; but when all the gold has been heaped together, there is still a chink through which the eye of the goddess can be seen. To fill this the giants demand the ring, which is now on Wotan's hand; he at first refuses to part with it; but at the interference of the goddess Erda, who rises from the earth to warn him against incurring the curse invoked on the possessor of the ring, he adds it to the pile, and the ransom is complete. Freia is delivered up to the gods, and the curse of the ring forthwith begins to work; Fafner claims the greater part of the Hoard for himself, and, on Fasolt's resistance, slays him.

Donner and Froh call the spirits of the clouds together, and a rainbow bridge spans the valley, passing over which the gods enter Walhalla, while the wail of the Rhine maidens for their lost gold rises from the depths beneath.

In this introduction to the Trilogy we find ourselves at once transported to a world of mystery, a world in which neither the bodily nor the spiritual eye can at once see clearly, and we apprehend with difficulty alike the actions and the motives of those who dwell within it. Nor is this atmosphere of mystery other than fitting for the representation of a legend which finds its roots far back in the earliest period of man's conscious thought and incomplete expression; and with which Wagner has thought well to interweave the early searchings of his race after eternal truths, shrouded by them in obscure mythological parables, and interpreted by him in accordance with that system of philosophic thought most in harmony with his genius.

The object of the *Rhine-Gold* is to set forth, in accordance with the indications of the legend, such an account of the origin of the Treasure, and of the Ring which is its

symbol, as shall explain its fatal power and render intelligible the curse which pursues all who, even innocently, possess it.

Now, in all this mysterious story which has woven into itself so many varying threads of history and legend, there is no more mysterious element than the Treasure itself. Whence did it come? Who were its original possessors? Why does it exercise so baneful an influence? Of all the versions, the Volsunga-saga alone professes to answer these questions, and even here the evidence is incomplete, and we are perforce led to the conclusion that before the legend had been transcribed, probably before it reached its settled form, the origin of the Nibelungen Hoard had been forgotten.

The *ethical* idea of which the legend is an expression is undoubtedly that of the evil influence of gold, which, according to old German mythology, was operative alike on gods and men. The golden age, the time of the innocence of the gods, was before they knew gold; before the creation of the dwarf-race, who wrought the precious metal out of the earth, and thus brought the lust of gold and the passions of greed and avarice into the world. This idea is deeply imbedded in German mythology, and has been expressed under varying forms, of which undoubtedly the myth of the Nibelungen Hoard was originally one; therefore when Wagner, in his drama, brings into sharp relief the fatal effects of the desire of gold, and yet triumphantly proclaims it less powerful and less enduring than love, he is but expressing a thought which, from the first, was a vital and integral part of the legend.

Whence, then, came this gold, here represented as reft from, and returning to, the bosom of the waters? The versions of the legend give varying accounts; in the Volsunga-saga, as we see, it was originally the property of the dwarf, Andvari, a dweller in the waters, and is taken from him by Loke, who hands it over to Hreidmar, and Sigurd wins it from Hreidmar's sons; the final destination of the Hoard, too, is the Rhine—thus it comes from, and returns to, the water. In the Thidrek-saga, on the other hand, there is no account of the original home of the Hoard; we learn casually that Sigfrid won it from the dragon; but how Regin, who is here the dragon, came into possession of it we are not told. Of the final fate of the Treasure we have an explicit account; it is hidden in a mountain-cave, where it remains concealed for ever from the sight of men. When we come to the Nibelungen-lied, we find that the Treasure is originally brought forth from a cave, and that Siegfried wins it from two brothers, Schilbung and Nibelung, though we are not told how they became possessed of it; its final destination is again the Rhine.

A popular version of the Siegfried story, the Siegfrieds-lied, gives a different but analogous account of the Treasure. Kriemhild has been carried off by a dragon and imprisoned in a cave on the Drachenfels; Siegfried slays, not only the dragon, but the giant Kuperan, who guards the mountain, and rescues the princess. Near at hand, in a cave, the dwarf Eugel and his brothers have hidden the Treasure of their father, Niblung, who died of grief when his mountain was captured by the giant.

Siegfried finds the Treasure, and, thinking it the Hoard of the dragon, carries it off; but as Eugel has foretold that he shall have but a short life, he reflects that the gold will be of little use to him, and when he comes to the Rhine he throws it into the waters.

We have here four versions of the winning and the hiding of the Treasure; in one instance we find it comes from the water, in two from the earth (being found in a cave); the fourth, the Thidrek-saga, gives no explicit account of its home. The three first all agree in making its final resting-place the Rhine, but the Thidrek-saga again differs from them, and represents it as hidden in a cave, *i. e.* it returns to the earth, and not to the water.

Now, in every case it is noticeable, that it is the version, either purely *German* in development, or avowedly based upon *German* tradition, which knows of the cave; the distinctively Northern variant only knows of the water. It is perfectly true that this Northern version as a whole is the more archaic in form, and more suggestive of the mythic character underlying the legend; but the original *source* is, as before said, *German,* and therefore, where the versions differ as decidedly as is here the case, it is necessary to examine more closely into the story before deciding that the Northern is, as a matter of course, the nearest to the original form.

An inquiry as to who were the original owners of the Treasure is necessary before we can solve the difficulty; and here we find that, in three out of the four versions, a *dwarf* is closely connected with it. In the Volsunga-saga it is taken from Andvari, and is his rightful prop-

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ALBERICH ROBBED BY WATER NYMPHS.

(After the painting by Hans Makart.)

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erty; in the Nibelungen-lied it is guarded by Alberich as the servant, first of the Nibelung brothers, then of Siegfried; in the Siegfrieds-lied it is the property of Eugel and his brothers. Further, in two out of these three instances a *giant* is also connected with it; in the Nibelungen-lied twelve giants help the Nibelungs to defend the Hoard, and a giant assists Alberich to guard the Treasure for Siegfried. Though the Volsunga-saga mentions no giant, yet the description of Fafnir as "the greatest and grimmest of Hreidmar's sons, who would have all things according to his will," is distinctly suggestive of his giant origin; and when Wagner in the drama represented him as a giant, he probably, as we shall see is often the case, instinctively reverted to the true form of the story.

If we turn to Northern mythology, we shall find that dwarf and giant alike are closely connected with each other and with the earth; the world itself was said to be formed out of the flesh of the giant Ymir, the first father of the race; and according to the Edda the dwarfs were the maggots which bred in the flesh of the giant, and were endowed by the gods with the shape and mind of men; another account represents them as formed directly out of the earth. Their dwelling is in rocks and in the earth, and from it they make gold.

It is, of course, true that the sea-dwellers, mermen and maidens and their kings, are also held to possess great treasures; but even there the gold is heaped up in caves, and belongs rather to the bed of the sea than the sea itself, to the earth rather than the water. On the whole,

it seems more in accordance with the indications of the legend to believe that originally the home of the Nibelungen Hoard was a mountain-cave, and its owner a dwarf, who most probably intrusted the guardianship of the Treasure to a giant, by whose death it was won; the dwarf himself does not seem to have been slain.

Who, then, are the Nibelungs, from whom the Hoard eventually takes its name? Certainly not the rightful owners; in every version they are subject to the curse, equally with the hero; and in whatever form we find them they suffer defeat, loss, and death. It is very difficult to discover who these Nibelungs originally are, from the fact that the name clings to the Treasure, and is transferred to its possessors for the time being; thus, in the Volsunga-saga, the Gibichungs become Niflungs after they are possessed of the Treasure by Sigurd's death; in the Nibelungen-lied, Siegfried and his men are Nibelungs after they have won the Hoard from the original bearers of the name, while, at the end of the poem, the title is transferred to the Burgundians, the last owners of the gold. In the Thidrek-saga, Aldrian and his sons are Nibelungs throughout. It will be noticed that the name clings with strange persistency to the royal family into which Siegfried marries and through whom he comes to his death; the reason seems to be that, though not now the representatives of the original Nibelungs of the primitive legend, they have retained certain of their characteristics, and have become closely interwoven with a personality which is certainly part of the original myth.

The name undoubtedly comes from the same root as

Nifl-heim and Nifl-hell, the lowest of the nine worlds of Northern mythology, the home of mist and darkness, and abode of departed spirits; and it clearly indicates the other world origin of the bearers of the name and one source of the fatal influence of the Treasure; for even had it not been cursed by its rightful owner, the very fact of its having been won from the under-world would make it a dangerous possession. The bearers of the name who committed the first theft of the gold were probably a father and two, or perhaps three, sons. In the Volsunga-saga it is Hreidmar and his sons Fafnir and Regin; in the Nibelungen-lied it is the two brothers Schilbung and Nibelung, and the gold to be divided has generally been held to have been their inheritance from their father; in the Siegfrieds-lied we have Eugel and his brothers—their father, Niblung, is dead. The Thidrek-saga, though so scanty in indication, has two brothers, Mimir and Regin, both of whom Sigfrid slays, and from one of whom he wins the Treasure. This regular recurrence of father and sons as owning the Treasure before it comes into the hero's hands cannot be a merely accidental coincidence, and the explanation seems to be that in them we have a survival of the original Niblungs or Niflungs, beings of evil origin, who reft the gold from its rightful owner, and by so doing themselves fell victims to the curse which pursues all who become possessed of it. The manner in which the curse affects the hero himself will be discussed when we come to the closing scenes of the drama; on Siegfried it appears to work *indirectly,* but *directly* on his murderers, whose death, as

related in the Volsunga-saga, was undoubtedly at first due to their possession of the fatal gold.

As to the final destination of the Treasure, the legend which represents it as being cast into the Rhine is probably correct; to throw it into the water would be the speediest means of restoring it to the powers of the under world, to whom it undoubtedly belonged. That the Thidrek-saga gives a different version is easily to be accounted for by the fact that the compiler knew, and followed, both Northern and German tradition; having followed the Volsunga-saga by making Siegfried win the gold from the dragon, he preserved the German version by altering its ultimate fate; such instances of transposition are not unusual. On the whole, the evidence seems to point to the fact that Wagner's version, poetical as it undoubtedly is, does not represent the true origin of the Hoard, and that the Rhine was not the cradle, though it was the final-resting place, of the fatal gold.

But leaving the baleful Treasure, let us now turn to the consideration of the feud between the gods and the giants, so vividly depicted in the drama. All students of German mythology know that the giants were the first of the unearthly races to come into existence, that their character and influence are represented as distinctly evil, and that they are the deadly enemies of the Asas, the gods who dwell in Asgard, who have overcome the giants and succeeded to their power. The story of the building of Walhalla, as given in the *Rhine-Gold,* is based upon the myth of Swadilfari, which runs as follows:—

After the gods had built Midgard and Walhalla (which

according to mythology, they built themselves) a certain master-builder came to them, and offered to build them a Burg which should serve as defence against the giants, asking as reward the goddess Freyja, and the sun and moon. The gods held counsel together, and at Loke's advice, promised to give him what he asked, provided that the Burg was built within the winter months, and that no man should aid him; were one stone lacking on the first summer day, he should forfeit all reward. The builder consented to the terms on condition that he might have the aid of his horse, Swadilfari, to which the gods readily agreed; but they were astonished when they saw the size of the blocks which the horse bare to the building, and how it did half as much work again as the man, and as the winter passed on and the Burg grew taller and taller, they became fearful of the ending of the matter. At last it wanted but three days to summer, and the Burg was finished all but the doorway; then the gods called upon Loke to aid them, since it was by his counsel they had made the contract. So Loke changed himself into a mare, and when the builder led his horse in the evening to collect stones for the next day's work, the mare ran out of the wood and neighed to the horse; and when the horse Swadilfari heard it, it brake the halter and ran into the wood after the mare, and the builder must needs chase the horse all night, and could not catch it, so he gathered together no stones, and the next day he did no work, and the Burg could not be finished in time. So when the builder saw this he flew into a great rage, and the gods knew that this was one of their foes, the mountain-giants

who had tried to betray them; and they called on Thor, and he came with his hammer and struck the giant on the head and slew him, and he fell down to Nifl-heim.

With this myth Wagner has apparently connected another, which tells how Loke, having fallen into the power of the giant Thjasse, wins his freedom by promising to betray the goddess Idun and her apples of youth into Thjasse's hands. This he does, and the gods discover the loss of Idun by finding themselves grow old and grey-headed. They inquire into the matter, and find out that Loke is, as usual, the source of the mischief, and therefore order him, on pain of death, to bring back Idun. This he promises to do if Freyja will lend him her falcon-dress, in which disguise he flees to Jötunheim, the abode of the giants, and carries off Idun in the shape of a nut or a swallow (there are two accounts).

The form of Freyja's ransom from the giants is, of course, based upon the account of Loke's ransom in the Volsunga-saga, which, alone of all the versions, directly connects the gods with the Nibelungen Hoard, though in the legend, having promptly given up gold and ring, they are in no way affected by the curse. Still, as mythology distinctly connects the fall of the gods, the Götterdämmerung and Weltenuntergang (from which catastrophe, however, gods and men alike are to arise renewed, purified, and restored to their original innocence), with the love of gold. Wagner can hardly be deemed to have exercised too much poetical license in representing them as closely concerned in the fate of the Treasure, and following with the keenest interest the fortunes of the race destined to win it from its evil possessors. But inasmuch as

these mythological events form no part of the original legend, it is unnecessary to examine them critically in order to see whether the version given by Wagner does or does not represent the original form of the story; it is sufficient for the comprehension of the drama to indicate the sources from which they are drawn.

The building of the rainbow-bridge by the gods themselves is in accordance with the mythological tradition; according to this, the rainbow binds heaven and earth together, and over it the gods ride daily to their seat of judgment by Urd's Brunnen, the spring which waters the roots of the world-ash, Ygdrassil. The home of the gods is in Asgard, with its twelve Himmels-burgen; of these, according to the Grimnersmal, a song found in the Edda, Gladsheim is the fifth, and within Gladsheim is Walhalla, where Odin has his high seat. Of the dwellers in Walhalla we will speak more fully further on; here it is sufficient to say that the root of the name is the word Wal, signifying choice; the slain in war are the elect, chosen of Odin, hence a very general name for a battlefield is Wal-statt or Wal-platz.

With this entrance of the gods into Walhalla, Wagner closes the introduction to his Trilogy; the Himmels-burg is built, and the giants are baffled; but the love of gold has already touched with baleful hands the gods, the golden age of their innocence is over; their solemn pledge has been evaded, the fatal theft is accomplished, and the curse has already begun its work. How the evil destiny unrolls itself with relentless force, till it involves gods and men alike in one common ruin, is told in the succeeding drama.

Chapter III.

THE VALKYRIE.

ARGUMENT.

Sieglinde, daughter of Wälsing, has been carried off by robbers, her father and brother, as she believes, slain, and she herself married against her will to Hunding.

To the forest-dwelling of Hunding and Sieglinde there comes a fugitive outlaw, overcome by conflict and weariness, in whom Sieglinde finally recognizes Siegmund, her twin-brother, and the predestined winner of the sword, Nothung, which at her wedding-feast a mysterious stranger had thrust up to the hilt in the trunk of the tree which supports their dwelling, and which can only be withdrawn by the bravest of men. Siegmund withdraws the sword with ease, claims Sieglinde alike as sister and bride, and the two fly together.

Wotan, in view of the inevitable conflict between Hunding and Siegmund, summons Brünnhilde, the Valkyrie, and bids her give the victory to Siegmund; but Fricka demands vengeance on the Wälsing, who had outraged the sanctity of the marriage vow, and, when Wotan resists, upbraids him with his own infidelity, Siegmund being, in truth, Wotan's son; against his will Wotan yields, and revokes his commands to Brünnhilde. The Valkyrie adjures him to give the reason for this change of purpose, and Wotan tells her of the fatal spell of the Nibelung Ring, which, till it is restored to its original owners, the Rhine-maidens must be a source of danger to the gods. Should Alberich recover possession of it, he, who by cursing Love had succeeded in welding the Ring, can use its magic runes with fatal effect against the gods, and so bring about their total ruin.

Wotan himself is powerless to recover the talisman, having given it as payment for services to the giants, of whom the survivor, Fafnir, holds it. It can only be won by a hero who, unconscious of the spell and unaided by the gods, to whose law and favour he is a stranger, is driven by his own necessity to the task.

Such a hero Wotan has thought to find in Siegmund, the outlaw, defiant alike of the laws of gods and men; but Fricka has detected the truth that Siegmund is, in fact, no free agent, Wotan's will having been the moving power of his actions. It was Wotan who was his father, Wotan who had prepared the

magic sword, Nothung, and Wotan who had led Siegmund to the dwelling of Sieglinde. Therefore Siegmund is ineligible for the task which the gods had assigned to him, and Wotan, his purpose penetrated by Fricka, must yield him up to her will. Brünnhilde, however, moved by admiration for Siegmund's dauntless bearing and love for Sieglinde, resolves to defy Wotan's expressed *will* and fulfill his hidden *wish*, by shielding Siegmund in the conflict. Wotan, however, interposes in wrath at her disobedience, the sword, Nothung, shivers on the spear of the god, and Siegmund falls, slain by Hunding. Brünnhilde flies with Sieglinde, who saves herself and her unborn child by taking refuge in the wood where Fafnir, in dragon form, watches over the Nibelungen Hoard.

The Valkyrie remains to brave the wrath of Wotan. In punishment for her disobedience the god banishes her from Walhalla, deprives her of her divinity, and condemns her to wed the mortal who shall rouse her from her magic slumber into which he will cast her. Brünnhilde beseeches that none save the bravest hero on earth (whom she forsees will be the son of Siegmund) shall waken her, and with this view entreats Wotan to defend her slumber by surrounding her with fire which none but the bravest may pass. Wotan yields, and, kissing her on the brow, he robs her of divinity and casts her into a slumber; then, striking his staff on the rock, flames spring up around the Valkyrie, amid which Wotan vanishes.

No longer in the water depths of the Rhine, or the cloudland home of the gods, the world to which the first day of the Trilogy introduces us is scarcely less mysterious than either; so primæval are its conditions, so lax its moral conceptions, so superhuman the force of the passions which rend and tear the dwellers within it. In truth, this Earth of the "Ring" drama is not merely the meeting-ground for gods and men, but is also the stage in which the fate common to both is to be worked out; and even as they share one fate, so are they partakers of one nature; and would we understand their actions, we must bear in mind the fact that this world is *not* as our world, nor are these dwellers in it men and women as we are. Intensely human are they, and yet *super*-human;

their characters and passions have a Titanic force and grandeur like the force of a mountain-torrent that scatters all around in chaotic confusion ere it makes for itself the channel in which its current may flow peacefully. History bears abundant witness to the force of the developed manhood of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races; Legend records the struggles of their undeveloped childhood.

In the *Valkyrie,* Wagner gives us the tragic history of the parents of the real hero of the drama, Siegfried; and here, with one important alteration—that of making Siegfried, instead of Sinfiotli, the child of the Volsung pair—he has closely followed the version of the Volsunga-saga. Whether this episode really belonged to the original Siegfried-saga seems doubtful; and it is still more doubtful that Wagner's version represents the original facts. Such a parentage would not be out of keeping with the hero's mythical origin, but it does seem to stand outside the formula characterising the birth and upbringing of that special family of Aryan heroes to which Siegfried belongs.

In any case the story of Siegmund and Sieglinde (or Signy, as she is named in the Volsunga-saga)[1] bears marks of very high antiquity; and, though distinctly repellent to our ideas as told in the saga, and even more so as represented by Wagner, it loses on close examination much of its repulsive character.

[1]Wagner probably changed the name of Signy to Sieglinde on account of the latter being the name given by the Nibelungen-lied to Siegfried's mother. Rassman considers Sieglinde to be one of the names of Brynhild as identified with Hilde. The manner in which the personalities of early mythology dissolve into each other is highly perplexing, and in most instances it seems better to adhere to the characters as represented in the legend, without trying to trace them to their original mythic source.

Northern mythology, in common with other systems, appears originally to have regarded its deities as bisexual, uniting the male and female principle (an example of this will be found in the account of the giant Ymir, who, as a deity, precedes both the Vans and Asas); at a later period we find the two separate and existing side by side as male and female counterparts of the same idea, and in this form they seem to have been considered alike as brother and sister, husband and wife; *i. e.* they are *two* and yet *one* being—in fact, varying manifestations of the same principle. Thus Freyr and Freyja, who are themselves children of a brother and sister, Niördhr and Nerthus, seem originally both to have represented the power of spring: Freyr, the active, quickening principle (who became afterwards a sun-god), and Freyja the responsive, the blossom and foliage which are drawn out by the genial warmth of spring. Brother and sister, they were also, Simrock considers, at one time husband and wife. (Is it not possible that this special instance was in Wagner's mind when he composed the exquisite "Lenzlied," which certainly gains in beauty and significance if regarded in this light?) In the same way we find that in German the Sun (feminine) is coupled with the (masculine) Day, and the Moon (masculine) with the (feminine) Night.

In this connection the instance of Isis and Osiris readily recurs to the mind, and Nerthus, mentioned above, has very many traits in common with Isis.

Now, German mythology knows a succession of deities, the first being the giants, who are considered as an

evil principle, and who as noted above were, at least in the first instance, bisexual. To them succeeded the Vans, a kindly race who seem to have been practically the powers of Nature personified; after a struggle with the Asas, who were originally of a more abstract and spiritual character, the Vans made peace with these latter, and were admitted into their ranks. The dominant gods of mythology, as we know it in its latest form, are Asas; but certain of the original Vans, such as Frey and Freyja, mentioned above, hold high rank among them.

We are distinctly told, as a characteristic of these Vans, that they held marriage between brother and sister to be lawful, whereas the Asas forbade it, and dissolved such unions before admitting the partners in them into their ranks; a parable clothing the natural course of mythological development. There seems to be very little doubt that Siegmund and Signy, in the Volsunga-saga, were in their origin such a divine pair; we are expressly told that they were twins, *i. e.* they were originally one being, and their survival in the saga seems to be due to a reminiscence of this older and practically extinct race of gods. The saga regards them as it is as descendants of Odin, and therefore of superhuman nature, and their whole story is cast in a superhuman mould. It must be admitted that such characters lose the more, the more they are euhemerised; to represent them as mortals is to run the risk of making them repulsive; they must be influenced by some force extraneous to themselves, be it Passion, or be it Fate, the irresistible power of which we ourselves as spectators acknowledge, before, as men and women, we

can cordially accept and sympathise with them. The compiler of the Volsunga-saga seems instinctively to have felt this, when he represented Signy as practically embodied revenge. Considering the sanctity of the tie of blood, *Sippe,* among the Northern nations, and the treachery of which the Volsungs have been the victims, Signy's conduct, even though she sacrifices her womanhood and the natural feelings of a mother to her vengeance, is perfectly intelligible; and the final scene in which, her task accomplished, she chooses death with the husband she has betrayed rather than life with Siegmund, goes far towards mitigating the natural horror we feel for her conduct. Utterly outside all possible conceptions of womanhood, Signy is yet one of the most awful and imposing figures in the whole roll of Helden-saga.

At the same time, the companion of her vengeance, Siegmund, never loses his hold on our sympathy; his conduct is perfectly natural and legitimate throughout, and in the most repulsive feature of the situation he is an unconscious agent. It is Signy's overwhelming passion for revenge which dominates and explains the whole situation; she, in fact, has remained superhuman, while Siegmund has become human.

When, however, we examine the situation in the *Valkyrie,* we find that the whole "motif" is changed—it is no longer Passion, but Fate, which is the determining factor in the situation; and into this idea of Fate Wagner has introduced a complexity of thought which, unless the actors are able by the force of their own personality to enlist on their side the sympathies of the audience,

must, by its very difficulty of comprehension, go near to wrecking the situation; emphasizing, while it fails to explain, the repellant nature of their conduct.

The idea that Siegmund can only carry out the task, for which he has been born, by being independent of all laws, human and divine, and becoming practically a law unto himself, is undoubtedly a fine conception, but one which, at this early stage of the drama, it is not easy to grasp; and the extremely complex character assigned to Wotan makes it difficult for us to regard him, himself helpless in the grasp of Fate, as being really the operative agent in the conduct of Siegmund and Sieglinde.

This difficulty was really inherent in the nature of the task which Wagner set himself. German mythology, in the form in which we possess it, is highly complicated and marked by distinct stages of evolution in the conception of its characters. Wagner, in order to provide an ethical background to his drama, and one which in essence and origin was curiously in harmony with his philosophical views, was compelled to compress these stages within the narrow limits of time required by the action, and this has inevitably increased the difficulty of understanding situations which require a clear grasp of the primæval, one may say pre-ethical, character of the actors. When we study this wonderful Siegfried legend in all its ramifications, tracing it back through historical development to mythical source, we feel that the task of giving adequate dramatic form to that alone would tax the power of genius to its utmost; but to treat it, as Wagner did, with philosophical developments based upon the most obscure

and mystical aspect of Northern mythology was a task which no mind but his could have conceived, and no genius but his dared attempt. It is no lack of appreciation which compels one to admit that even Wagner was at times scarcely equal to the colossal demands of such a work, and that there are moments when the execution falls short of the conception, and the outward form fails to convey to our minds *all* that the dramatist would have had it express. Not only do we find that Sieglinde is in dramatic interest distinctly inferior to her prototype Signy, but we also feel that the wrongs inflicted upon her by Hunding are not in themselves of a nature to justify her conduct. True, he has purchased her from robbers and married her against her will, but in those primitive times such conduct was hardly exceptional, much less unforgivable; and there is a certain rough chivalry in Hunding's treatment of Siegmund, and observance of the claims of *Gast-recht,* which makes the latter's flight with the wife of his host bear a disagreeably treacherous aspect. One is not surprised at Hunding's pursuit of the pair, and it certainly rather destroys sympathy with the hero, and sorrow at his fate, to have a lurking feeling that, after all, he deserved it! Lovers of the Volsunga-saga, and those familiar with Morris's magnificent poetical rendering of the episode, will hardly be willing to accept the actors in the *Valkyrie* as an adequate representation of the heroic Volsung brother and sister.

The remark made by Hunding as to the glittering worm which glances from the eyes alike of Siegmund and Sieglinde, shows that Wagner knew the Ragnar-

Lodbrok-saga, which connects the story of Sigurd with the royal house of Norway. In this saga Aslog, the daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, in danger of being divorced from her husband, King Ragnar-Lodbrok, on account of her supposed peasant origin, prophesies to her husband that the child about to be born to them shall bear a dragon in (or around) his eyes, which shall be a proof of his descent from the great Dragon-slayer; a prophecy which is fulfilled, and the nobility of Aslog's birth thereby established. In the saga the significance of the *Schlangen-auge* is obvious: "Wurm im Auge trägt nur andern Wurmes Tödter;" but here, inasmuch as the slaying of the Dragon is still to come, the allusion loses somewhat of its force.

The tree in the midst of Hunding's hut is, of course, the Branstock, which finds a mythological counterpart in the uppermost boughs of the Ash Ygdrassil, which grows up through the centre, and overshadows the roof of Walhalla. Wagner has far more closely connected the origin of the Volsungs with Wotan, whom he makes identical with Wälse, and therefore the immediate father of the race. The sword thrust into the Branstock appears to have been, in the original legend, Odin's own sword; we find from mythology that the god was in the habit of lending his weapons, sword, spear, and occasionally his mantle and steed, to those heroes whom he especially favoured. The sword episode necessarily loses somewhat of its original force in the drama, by reason of the rapidity of the action, which makes Siegmund win the weapon which he has been promised shall aid him in his greatest

need, only to find it fail him. In the legend he retains it throughout a long life, and it is only when, having reached an advanced age, it is time that the favour of the war-god be transferred to a younger hero (a feature which frequently recurs in Northern legend), that the weapon breaks. In the Volsunga-saga the sword is called "Gram," which signifies "wrath," according to Rassmann, because it is Odin's anger alone which breaks it; the name given in the Nibelungen-lied to Siegfried's sword, "Balmung," he considers signifies "destruction," and is rather indicative of the death-dealing power of the weapon. The account given by Siegmund of his and his father's wanderings in the woods, and the name by which he calls himself, Wölfing, recall the strange were-wolf episode in the story of Siegmund and Sinfiotli, a feature which is held by critics to denote the extremely early date of this part of the legend. Wagner was doubtless aware of the interesting character of this feature of the story, and unwilling to drop it altogether.

It may here be well to pause a little before following the course of the drama further, and discuss the character of the god who plays so prominent a part in Wagner's version of the Siegfried-myth, a character by no means easy of comprehension. It would, however, be unfair to charge all the obscurity and difficulty which surrounds Wotan to Wagner's account, for much is inherent in the nature of the god as primarily conceived by the Northern folk. At the root of his being lies the element of Air: a feature in most early mythologies is the recurring Trilogy of Deities, based upon the three elements—Air,

Water, and Fire; the *fourth,* Earth, seems always to have been regarded as feminine, the mother-element, and as such wooed, and dominated, now by one elementary power, now by another. To the Air, the most universally pervading of the three, the primary place in the Trilogy was assigned; and, natural and spiritual conceptions being closely bound up together, the god of the Air, at least in German mythology, assumed a double character, best understood perhaps by reference to the Greek word *pneuma,* with its double signification of *breath* and *spirit.* Thus to Northern minds Odin was not only the god of the Air, whose eyes were the Sun and Moon (from whence he also assumed at one time the character of a sun-god), but was also the embodiment of the spirit, *Gemüth,* of the Northern folk; and this national spirit being essentially a warlike one, he was also depicted as a war-god, and the sword and spear belong to him in this character. Closely connected with the more spiritual conception is also that which personified Odin in three aspects—the Trilogy of Odin, Wili, and We, the second of which regards him as the Will.

The original name, Odhin, *Northern,* Wuotan, *German,* seems to be derived from a word signifying "penetrating movement," which now survives in the narrower form of *waten,* to wade; so that the primary conception of this, the principal god of Northern mythology, may be summed up as the all-pervading spirit of Nature. This original idea, however, became in process of time considerably modified; certain of Odin's characteristics were, if not altogether passed over to, at least largely shared in

by, other gods. Thus we early lose sight of him as the Sun-god, Baldur and Freyr having here taken his place (a point which we shall have occasion to enlarge upon later); in fact, the early conception of Odin as a *nature* god seems in great measure to have given way to the conception of Odin as a spiritual god, the embodiment of the *spirit* of the Germanic peoples. Wagner has fully grasped this idea, as is seen in the words in which Fricka reproaches Wotan for his attempt to free himself from responsibility for Siegmund's conduct. "Was Hehres sollten Helden je wirken das ihren Göttern verwehrt, deren Gunst in ihnen nur wirkt?" "Ihres eignen Muthes achtest du nicht." "Wer hauchte Menschen ihn ein?" Fricka's question can have but one answer: Odin, or Wotan, alone, was the animating spirit in those heroes; the more valiant they were, the more completely were they the instruments of his will, his *Wunschsöhne.*

It is necessary to understand this fundamental idea of mythology in order to appreciate the full difficulty of Wotan's position in the drama; he is attempting to do that which the very essence of his being renders it impossible for him to do.

And here we must remember that omnipotence was *not* a characteristic of these Northern gods; the men who wove this wonderful web recognised that there were contingencies which even their gods could not avert; behind all this glittering assembly of gods, giants, elves, and heroes brooded in the background a power dominant over gods and men alike—the power of Fate. It is this which gives so weird and mysterious a character to Northern

mythology; the gradual declension of the gods, the Götterdämmerung and Weltenuntergang, are inevitable, and the gods themselves know this. They can put off the evil day by chaining Loke and his monstrous sons, the Fenris wolf and the Midgard serpent; they can, with the aid of men, protect themselves by hindering the building of the ship, Naglfar, and providing the leather for the shoe of Widar, with which he shall overcome the Fenris wolf; they can collect the spirits of the valiant slain in Walhalla, to form their army in the last struggle; but the day of the great conflict is bound to come, and they know that in that conflict many of them, and all mankind save two, must fall; but for the survivors there shall arise out of the ruins of the old a new Heaven and a new Earth, and gods and men will alike be restored to their primæval innocency.

Sundry mysterious songs in the Edda treat of the conduct of the gods, especially Odin, in face of the warnings of the coming catastrophe; and we shall find that Wagner throughout has very closely followed the mythological indications. It is true that, in mythology, the Nibelungen Hoard is in no way connected with the danger which threatens the gods, but, as we remarked before, there is no doubt that their ruin is brought about, at least partially, by their love of gold; and further, we find that the death of Baldur is one of the tokens of the coming storm: and, as we shall see, Siegfried, on whose death, in the drama, the Götterdämmerung closely follows, is undoubtedly an incarnation of the Sun-god, Odin, Baldur, or Freyr. If we, therefore, keep this mythological under-

current well in view, we shall find the various parts of the puzzle fit together easily, and the unity of thought underlying the seeming confusion of this wonderful drama becomes clearly apparent.

Returning to the action of the drama, we find that the most noticeable departure from the original legend, and one which cannot be considered otherwise than as a dramatic gain, is the connection of the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde (or Brynhild) with the fate of the parents of the hero; in no version of the legend does she appear save as connected with Siegfried himself, and in the Volsunga-saga alone is her previous history hinted at; but without the knowledge of some such history her character in both Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied is incomprehensible, and Wagner evidently recognised this when he adhered to the *Northern* rather than to the *German* version of the story. The Valkyrie, the warlike maidens of Northern mythology, are familiar figures in poetry and legend; themselves the elect of Odin, it is their mission to carry into effect his will upon the battlefields of earth, to shelter those chosen for victory, to conduct the spirits of the valiant slain to Walhalla. But they do not always appear in the same form. Nor are they always of identical origin; in fact, we meet with them under at least three distinct aspects. They may be of directly divine origin, in which form they seem to be simply a multiplication of the goddess Freyja, who not only appears occasionally as Odin's wife (and therefore identical with Fricka or Frigg), but is in this character also chooser and sharer of the slain—one-half belonging to her, and one-half to

Odin; *i. e.* she is also a war-goddess. As mentioned before, Freyr and Freyja are really *nature* gods, *Vanengötter,* who have been adopted into the ranks of the Asas; Freyja has, in consequence, been separated from her husband-brother and her original character obscured. She is also represented as being cup-bearer to the gods, an office in which she again appears as identical with the Valkyrie, who act as cupbearers to the Einherier, the heroic dwellers in Walhalla.

Again, the Valkyrie appear as swan-maidens, in which character they are not necessarily of divine origin. In the lay known as "Brynhild's Hell-reid" we find her saying that King Agnar had stolen the swan-skins of herself and her seven sisters, and so forced her to yield to his love and become his victory-bringer. Brynhild is therefore, apparently, a swan-maiden.

But the Valkyrie could also be of distinctly earthly origin; king's daughters who devoted themselves to warlike deeds and perpetual maidenhood might be received into their ranks. It is such who, strictly speaking, are Odin's *Wunsch-mädchen,* his adopted daughters (as Simrock renders the term), even as the dwellers in Valhalla are his *Wunch-söhne;* it is the mission of both alike to carry out All-Father's will, and in so doing to find their reward. But should one of these Valkyrie fall in love with and marry a mortal, she loses her power; this we find in the case of one of the most famous of the sisterhood, Sigrun, daughter of King Hogni, who weds Helgi (son of Sigmund, and half-brother to Sigurd), whose story is the basis of the famous Lenore legend. Before marriage she

can bestow victory on the favoured hero, but, once his wife, her power to protect him is gone.

In this lay of Sigrun we have a curious indication of another power apparently possessed by the Valkyrie, *i. e.* that of raising the dead slain in battle to life again, and thus indefinitely prolonging the struggle. Sigrun is here identified with Hilde, whose name, signifying "War," has become a component part of many German names; Simrock considers Hilde, who is practically the German war-goddess, to be identical with Freyja, the original Valkyrie, and also to be incarnated in Brynhild.

The feature of the dead being reawakened to life during the night after a battle also occurs in Celtic tradition, and is found in romances connected with the Grail myth; but here the agent is no longer a fair maiden, but a hideous hag, or "Carlin." The number of the Valkyrie varies, but it is generally seven, nine, or twelve, though in the lay already alluded to, "Brynhild's Hell-reid," we find eight. Of these Brynhild is one of the most famous, though it is not very easy to determine whether she was of really divine origin, as Wagner represents her, or of mortal birth, a Valkyrie by virtue of her virginity.

The account of her first meeting with Sigurd, and her awakening upon Hindfell, in the Volsunga-saga, is taken from the "Lay of Sigrdrifa," where the awakened maiden tells Sigurd how, in punishment for her having given the victory to King Agnar in opposition to Odin, who had elected the veteran Hjalm-gunnar, the god had smitten her with the sleep-thorn, deprived her of the power of bestowing victory, and condemned her to wed a mortal,

though he had respected her vow to wed no man who had known fear. Here Sigrdrifa, who is also a wise-woman, a prophetess, and a teacher of runes, is evidently of unearthly origin; and in the "Hell-reid" Brynhild distinctly identifies herself with this character, and explains how it was that King Agnar forced her to disobey Odin, namely, by the theft of her swan-shift.

But when we come to Sigurd's *second* meeting with Brynhild, we find her as the mortal maiden, the King's daughter, and Heimir's ward.

And it is in this character as the *mortal* Valkyrie, whose power depends on her maidenhood, that the *German* legend knows her. The fact seems to be that the Volsunga-saga has combined in one the stories of two Valkyrie, of different origin—one divine, one mortal.

The punishment awarded to the disobedient Brünnhilde undoubtedly symbolises the punishment of death. According to Grimm, the flames which surround the sleeping Valkyrie are the flames of the funeral pyre (*Scheiterhaufen*), which was customarily hung round with shields and costly hangings, and might therefore well be depicted as a *Schildburg*. The fact that the pyre was interwoven with thorns, and kindled with a thorn-branch, and the idea that death was but a slumber from which the soul awoke to new life, gave rise to the expression of the *sleep-thorn*. In another mythological legend we find the gods cast into a deep sleep by a thorn-branch, which is wielded by the god of Night.

That Brynhild's awakening really typifies the visit of the hero to the other world will be shown later on.

Wotan's concluding invocation of Loge is easily understood when we remember that in the Trilogy of Northern gods, as Air lies at the basis of Odin's or Wotan's personality, so does Fire at that of Loke or Loge. In the double character of Fire, proverbially "a good servant, but a bad master," we have the explanation of the double part which Loke plays in mythological legends. When the gods are ruled by his advice, he invariably misleads and betrays them; but when, driven to desperation, they force him by threats to find a way out of the *impasse* he himself has brought about, he is always equal to the occasion.

On the whole, the character assigned to Loke is decidedly evil; and in the fact that he and the monsters who owe their birth to him are the real elements of danger to gods and men alike, and it is their breaking their bonds which will bring about the final catastrophe of the Götterdämmerung, we find a testimony to the antiquity of the belief that the world will finally be destroyed by the agency of Fire.

Chapter IV.

SIEGFRIED.

ARGUMENT.

Siegfried, the son of Siegmund and Sieglinde, has been brought up in the forest by the dwarf Mime, who intends to use Siegfried as his instrument in recovering for him the Nibelung Hoard and Ring. The great obstacle in the way of his carrying out his plan is his failure to forge a suitable weapon, Siegfried at once breaking in pieces every sword Mime can make. Indignant at these repeated failures, Siegfried at last wrings from Mime the confession that his mother, dying, had intrusted him with the fragments of Nothung, Siegmund's sword, and Siegfried bids him weld these fragments anew; Mime knows himself to be unequal to the task, and yet knows that no other weapon will serve for the slaying of Fafnir.

Wotan, in the guise of the Wanderer, appears to Mime; and in a riddling contest, in which each stakes his head on the successful solving of three questions, forces from Mime the confession of his failure, and then reveals to him that Nothung can only be forged anew by one to whom fear is unknown.

On Siegfried's return, Mime admits his inability to fulfill the task, and bids the lad attempt it himself, which he does with success. Mime, having vainly endeavored to extort a confession of fear from Siegfried, promises to lead him to Fafnir, in whose presence he will surely learn it.

Alberich, who watches Fafnir's retreat in the hope of regaining the Ring himself, is warned by Wotan (the Wanderer) of Mime's intention of winning the Hoard through the instrumentality of Siegfried, and both endeavour, but vainly, to put Fafnir on his guard.

Siegfried, led by Mime to the neighbourhood of the dragon's cave, attempts to imitate the song of the birds, and awakens Fafnir by his horn; but, far from feeling fear at the monster's appearance, he is only roused to wrath by his threats, and attacks him, finally piercing him to the heart with Nothung. His hand being scorched by the fiery blood of the dragon, the lad places it to his lips to cool it; and as soon as he tastes the blood, he understands the song of a bird, warning him to take possession both of Ring and Tarn-Helmet, and to be on his guard against Mime's treachery.

Consequently, when Mime approaches him with flattering words, Siegfried detects the thought beneath; and on the dwarf offering him a poisoned drink, he slays him and casts his body into the cave, the entrance to which he closes with the corpse of the dragon. Resting under a tree, the bird sings of Brünnhilde, the sleeping Valkyrie, who can only be awakened from her fire-girdled slumber by one who knows no fear; Siegfried announces that he has never learned that lesson, and bids the bird lead him to Brünnhilde.

Wotan awakes the goddess Erda to tell her that her wisdom is now baffled, for his will accepts what her knowledge foretold. The Ring has been won by Siegfried, and Brünnhilde, the daughter of Wotan and Erda, shall work out its curse, and, having learned *to know*, shall carry through the deed which shall free the world. There is no further need for Erda's wisdom, and Wotan bids her to everlasting slumber.

Siegfried, led by the bird, arrives at the foot of Brünnhilde's mountain, where he is confronted by the Wanderer, who would bar the way with his spear; Siegfried hews the weapon asunder with his sword, and makes his way through the flames to the summit of the mountain, where he finds the Valkyrie sleeping under a fir-tree. He removes her helmet, and cuts off her corslet with Nothung, and, at the sight of the first woman he has ever seen, feels at last the touch of fear. Brünnhilde, awakened by Siegfried's kiss, at first shrinks in terror from her fate; then, recognizing the hero as the son of Siegmund, whose coming she had herself foretold, confesses her love, and yields in ecstasy to his embrace.

THE first day of the drama closed amid the lurid surroundings of flame, defeat, and death; the second day opens in the shades of the woodland sanctuary where Sieglinde sought refuge, and where the orphan child of herself and Siegmund has been brought up under the care of the dwarf Mime, and in total ignorance of his parentage. And here we find that Wagner, who has hitherto followed closely the course of the legend as presented in the Volsunga-saga, departs from this version of the story, and bases his drama on the far less well-known Thidrek-saga.

We may accept the fact that dramatic considerations

had doubtless much to do with this change of authority; but that here, as elsewhere, Wagner's instinct was a true one, and led him to select out of various conflicting versions that one which, though not oldest in form, was really most closely in accord with primitive tradition, seems to be more than probable.

Among the folk-tales current in the various branches of the great Aryan family, we find a certain sequence of incident recurring, now in connection with one hero, now with another, marking all these tales, whatever their nationality, with a certain unmistakable likeness the one to the other, and rendering it practically certain that they are all variants of one original tradition. This special sequence of incident J. G. von Hahn, in his *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien,* designated as the *Arische Aussetzungs-und-Rück-kehr Formel* (Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula); and he there collected fourteen stories belonging to various branches of the Aryan race, each of which conformed with more or less exactness to the prescribed formula. Of these, besides the legend we are considering, it will be sufficient here to mention two of the best known, the incidents of which will readily recur to the mind of the reader: *i. e.*, in Greek legend, Perseus; in Roman, Romulus and Remus.

To the list given by J. G. von Hahn, Mr. Alfred Nutt, in an article on the subject in the *Folk-Lore Record,* vol. iv., added eight examples drawn from Celtic sources (to these Celtic variants we will return later on). It seems, therefore, practically certain that, whatever the original signification of the formula, or whatever the cause which

led to the first moulding of the legend into such a shape, the sequence of incident is of extreme antiquity; and the nations who possess the story, by whatever name they may elect to call its hero, really hold it as a part of their original Aryan inheritance.

Mr. Nutt, in his *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail* (chap. vi.), tabulates this formula as follows:

I. Hero born
  (a) Out of wedlock.
  (b) Posthumously.
  (c) Supernaturally.
  (d) One of twins.

II. Mother, princess residing in her own country.

III. Father.
  (a) God
  (b) Hero
  } from afar.

IV. Tokens and warning of hero's future greatness.

V. He is in consequence driven forth from home.

VI. **Is suckled by wild beasts.**

VII. **Is brought up by a childless couple,** or shepherd, or widow.

VIII. **Is of passionate and violent disposition.**

IX. **Seeks service in foreign lands.**
  (a) **Attacks and slays monsters.**
  (b) **Acquires supernatural knowledge through eating a fish or other magic animal.**

X. Returns to his own country, retreats, and again returns.

XI. Overcomes his enemies, frees his mother, seats himself on the throne.

Now, if we take the account of Siegfried's birth and upbringing as given in the Thidrek-saga, we cannot fail to be struck by its close conformity to the recognised se-

quence; the incidents printed in bold face type all occur in this version, while those lacking here, though easily supplied from other sources, yet exist in a less simple and direct form than in the Thidrek-saga. The one point in which the account of the Thidrek-saga has been noticeably modified by later tradition is that of the hero's parentage and birth, which not only does not conform strictly to the formula, but shows evident traces of romantic influence; the falsely accused wife is a familiar figure in mediæval tales, but is too late in colouring to fit in well with the incidents of Siegfried's career, which belong to Heroic Legend rather than to Märchen. Nevertheless, even here the Thidrek-saga has preserved a very curious feature in the glass casket in which the infant is borne away by the stream, which is closely paralleled by the chest in which Perseus, the Greek formula hero, and his mother Danae are carried away by the sea. (There are other points of special agreement between Perseus and Siegfried, *e. g.* the interest taken by the gods in the career of the hero, which extends to their arming him with their own weapons; as we noted before, *Gram* is Odin's own sword.)

Taking, therefore, incidents VI. to IX. (*b*) inclusive, as represented in the Thidrek-saga, we find the account given by the Volsunga-saga closely in accord with I. (*b*), II., and III. (*b*), while it also conforms to IV. in Hjalprek's prophecy of the future greatness of the Volsung child, when the new born infant is brought before him. Incidents X. and XI. do not figure prominently in the Volsunga-saga, but they are nevertheless not altogether

missing; Sigurd slays the sons of Hunding and regains his father's kingdom, a point emphasised by Rassmann, who holds that the favour shown by Odin to the Volsungs was contingent on their retaining possession of the kingdom originally given by the god to Sigi.

Incident v. appears in the Siegfrieds-lied, where King Sigmund expels his son from his kingdom on account of his violent and turbulent nature; it is here dependent rather on VIII. than on IV., but the survival is significant.

It will therefore be found, taking one version with another, that in Siegfried we have a remarkably perfect conformity to the requirements of the formula, and that he may be considered not only as *the* Teutonic hero, *par excellence,* but also as a typical Aryan hero.

Who Siegfried's mother really was, in the original legend, it is not very easy now to discover; that his father was a hero of semi-divine origin named Sigmund, seems tolerably certain; but, curiously enough, here all the variations are in the identity of the mother. The princess Hjordis, as noted above, conforms most closely to the recognised formula, and with this would agree the Danish Helden-lieder which represent Siwart or Sivord (Sigurd) as the son of a widow, therein agreeing closely with other tales of this family.

In spite, however, of the later date of the Thidrek-saga as regards Siegfried's parentage, that it not only represents more fully the original tradition of the hero's youth, but also the tradition lying at the root of the Volsunga-saga, becomes evident when we examine the latter closely. For here, too, the smith appears as Sigurd's

foster-father, a quite unnecessary character, since Sigurd has been brought up at the court of his mother's husband, who treats him in all respects as his own son. The circumstances of the case do not require Regin at all; he is evidently a survival of a state of things where he *was* necessary, and this we find in the Thidrek-saga.

Again, when Fafnir asks Sigurd of his name and parentage, the hero replies, "Unknown to men is my kin. I am called a noble beast: neither father have I, nor mother." The refusal to tell his name may of course be accounted for on other grounds, but the assertion that he has "neither father nor mother" seems to point to an account of Sigurd's parentage other than that represented by the Volsunga-saga, and anterior to that version.

The name of the smith who is Siegfried's master will be seen to vary. *Mimir* plays a somewhat important part in the Thidrek-saga; he is also the master of the famous Wieland, the smith, who is removed by his father from Mimir's care to escape the persecutions of Siegfried, who ill-treats both his fellow-pupils and Mimir's serving-men. The fact that the compiler of the Thidrek-saga utilized both German and Northern tradition has already been noted, and it seems probable that Mimir, or Mime, was the original *German* name of the smith, and that he changed the name of the dragon to Regin, in order to preserve also the *Northern* name of the more famous brother. Rassmann considers that Regin is derived from Regino, *Rath-geber,* and it is possible that the name was changed in order to denote the wisdom and cunning with which the smith was gifted.

The incident of the Bear, introduced here by Wagner, has evidently been transferred from the Nibelungen-lied, where Siegfried, during the fatal hunt, captures a bear and lets it loose among the serving-men, a practical joke better befitting the boy than the man.

In the account of the forging of the sword Wagner has again returned to the Volsunga-saga, which alone knows of the fragments of the father's sword. In the Thidrek-saga it is a sword of Mimir's own forging; nor, in the Northern version, does the smith find the task in any sort beyond his power. The German tradition, which, on the whole, seems to regard Thidrek, or Dietrich, as a greater hero than Siegfried, also knows a sword which is a more potent weapon than Gram; this is Mimung, the sword of Witig or Widga, the son of Wieland the smith, and one of Dietrich's companions. Wieland forged this blade and gave it the name of Mimung (evidently in remembrance of his old master, Mimir), and Siegfried knows and dreads its power. In the single combat between Siegfried and Dietrich, the former exacts an oath from the hero of Bern that he is not wielding Mimung, which Dietrich, who has in truth borrowed the sword from Witig, evades by a ruse, and succeeds in overcoming Siegfried. Of course, in the Thidrek-saga, Gram, which is of Mimir's own forging, would hardly have the miraculous power possessed by a weapon which, in the Volsunga-saga, is evidently divine.[1]

In the interview between Mime and Wotan, Wagner has clearly been influenced by the Eddaic poem known

[1]Rydberg's theory of the origin of the Hoard, given at the conclusion of the studies on the "Ring," goes far to explain the superiority of Mimung.

as the "Vafthrudnersmal," where Odin holds a similar competition with the all-knowing giant, Vafthrudner. The question which the latter cannot answer, and by failing to do so forfeits his head to Odin, is, "What did Odin say in the ear of his son as he mounted the funeral pyre?" the son being Baldur, and the whole incident having reference to the overshadowing "Götterdämmerung." These riddling competitions dealing with obscure questions of Fate, the divine government of the world, etc., seem to have been favourite subjects for mediæval poetry. We have a remarkable example in the poem of the Wartburg-Krieg.

Odin, as the Wanderer, is well known in Northern mythology. In this character the Vafthrudnersmal knows him as Gangradr; in the Vegtamskvida, a poem to which we shall have occasion to refer later on, he calls himself Vegtam; but Gangradr, which seems to signify a tireless wanderer, is the better-known name. His outward presentment is that of an old man, one-eyed, with flowing hair and beard, wrapped in a blue cloak, with a broad-leaved hat drawn over his forehead.

The feature of the principal god visiting the earth, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or two companions, is of very frequent occurrence in all mythologies; and we find a survival of the belief in the sometimes childish, yet often quaint and beautiful, mediæval legends of the wanderings of our Lord with one or two of His Apostles, most frequently with S. Peter alone.

Siegfried's encounter with the dragon, which follows here directly on the forging of the sword, takes place, as

in the Thidrek-saga, in the woodland, and not on the desolate heath of the Northern saga. Rassmann refers the name of this latter, the Gnita-heide, to the Anglo-Saxon root *gnîtan,* to shine, and connects it with the Glas-berg, where, as we shall see, according to some versions of the legend, Brynhild had her dwelling; and understands both alike to signify the under-world, which is not always a place of darkness, but sometimes of light and joy.

But the home of the departed spirits is often surrounded by thick woods and forests, and in these woods dwell fearful serpents and unearthly monsters, which must be confronted by the hero who would penetrate beyond the borders; and great treasures of gold are hidden in the under-world. So it may be that these two accounts of the dragon's home are not really, as they seem at first sight, contradictory the one of the other, but are originally part of the same tradition, the dragon symbolising the power of darkness. It seems possible, too, that in the original legend the dragon guarded the maiden; as it is, we find Sigurd guided to Brynhild as a direct consequence of the death of the monster, a feature which Wagner has retained.

Morris, in his version of the legend, renders Gnita-heide as the Glittering Heath, but seems to interpret the name as having reference to the Hoard, thereby obscuring the "other-world" significance of the story.

The incident of Siegfried's obtaining the power of understanding the song of birds by eating a part of the dragon's flesh, or tasting the blood, is, as reference to the formula given above will show, an integral part of the

Aryan tradition. We meet it in other countries in slightly varying forms: in Celtic tradition we find it in the story of Finn and the Salmon of Wisdom; in Kymric in that of Gwion and the Caldron of Inspiration. In these two instances, the effect produced is much greater, being the gift of all wisdom; whereas, in the Siegfried myth, it is only the power of understanding the song of birds.

The feature of the dragon's blood conferring invulnerability on Siegfried could scarcely be retained in the drama, and Wagner has therefore replaced it by Brünnhilde's spells. There seems every reason to believe that it formed part of the original tradition; every distinctively German version has retained the *fact* of Siegfried's inability to be wounded save in one place, though they differ slightly as to the means by which this was brought about; attributing it sometimes to the blood of the dragon as in the Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied, sometimes to the horny hide of the monster, which melts in the fire, as in the Siegfrieds-lied. The Volsunga-saga, alone, totally omits the incident, and that it departs from the original tradition in doing so will be shown when we discuss the manner of the hero's death.

Wagner, here, suddenly interrupts the progress of the legend to introduce an interview between Wotan and the Wala, Erda, the outline of which has undoubtedly been suggested by the Eddaic poem above referred to, the Vegtamskvida. This poem is closely connected with another, "Odin's Rabenzauber," which recounts the dismay of the gods at the portents foreboding Baldur's death and the coming Götterdämmerung. Odin, while the

other gods sit in council, mounts his horse, Sleipnir, and rides to Niflheim, where he wakes the dead Wala, the prophetess, from her last slumber, and, hiding his identity under the name of Vegtam, forces her to answer the questions he puts to her. But from her dark sayings he wins no comfort, and the two finally reproach each other. "Du bist nicht Vegtam, Odin bist du, der Allerschaffer," while Odin retorts—

> "Du bist keine Vala, kein wissendes Weib,
> Vielmehr bist du dreier Thursen Mutter"—[1]

stanzas of which the words in the drama appear to be a reminiscence. No such connection as that indicated by Wagner appears to have really existed between Odin and the Wala, but Northern mythology relates how the god wins and wooes by a ruse the maiden Rinda (by whom, it has been foretold, he shall have a son who shall avenge the death of Baldur), and *Rinda* has been interpreted as signifying the earth, under her winter and frost-bound aspect. Here, for the first time, Wotan reveals himself distinctly as "the Will," an aspect which, as before pointed out, is in no sense alien to his original conception, but is, in fact, included in it.

This presentation of Wotan as the Will is, however, interpreted by Wagner rather in accordance with Schopenhauer's philosophy, than as illustrative of the mythological conception, and it is very interesting to remark with what curious facility this attitude of the god towards the approaching catastrophe, as portrayed in the Eddaic

[1] "No waywise (Vegtam) art thou, as I took thee to be, but thou art Woden, the ancient sire."
"No Sibyl art thou, nor wise-woman, but thou art the mother of three monsters."

poems, lent itself to this philosophical interpretation. The Götterdämmerung, the apparent destruction of the gods, is in reality their salvation; the survivors alike of gods and men will arise from the general wreck freed from the haunting fear of their deadly enemies, purified from their sins, and restored to a condition of innocency. The attitude of the gods towards the coming catastrophe, of which they also foresee the ultimate issues, is therefore not merely passive and fatalistic, but one of willing acceptance of a necessary discipline, *i. e. the renunciation of the will to live;* and this scene between Wotan and Erda is to be understood as the god's acceptance and enunciation of this principle.

We now approach what is really the central incident of the whole drama, and one which displays clearly the originally mythic character of the hero, the awakening of Brünnhilde by Siegfried.

The "Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula," as quoted above, makes no special mention of this incident, but the freeing of a maiden from peril, or death, under circumstances of danger and difficulty, is very frequently one of the hero's achievements, and may perhaps be included under the heading of IX. (*a*). The special presentment of the Volsunga-saga may be taken as due to a myth connected with the god Freyr and his wooing of Gerda, in which myth he appears as a sun-, rather than a spring-god. In the original form of the legend, Freyr himself rides through the Waberlohe and the thorn-hedge which surround Gerda's dwelling, to win his bride; in the later form of the story he sends his servant, Skir-

nir, lending him sword and steed for the purpose; and these two versions have evidently been united in the Volsunga-saga, where Sigurd rides the flames *twice,* once for himself and once for Gunnar.

The myth is originally a nature-myth, typifying the awakening of the earth from her winter sleep by the vivifying power of the sun; but it early gained a more extended and spiritual significance as relating the visit of the hero to the other-world, the greatest achievement alike of gods and of men.

Grimm's identification of the "Waberlohe" with the flames of the funeral pyre has met with general acceptance among scholars; and when we examine the various dwellings which tradition assigns to the heroine of the legend, comparing them with the dwellings of the other-world, we shall find that in every instance the indications of the Volsunga-saga are borne out, and that there is a general consensus of testimony to the effect that Siegfried's visit to Sigrdrifa, or Brünnhilde, really represents a visit of the hero to the abode of the dead, the other-world. Thus in the Thidrek-saga Brynhild dwells in a castle named Segard (which appears to indicate that it was at least on the coast, if not on an island), the doors of which Siegfried bursts open by force, slaying all who would oppose him. This dwelling of Brynhild's is either in or near Bertangaland, which is generally identified as Britain. With this closely agrees the Nibelungenlied, which represents the princess as ruling over *Island* and dwelling in the castle of Isenstein on the sea-shore. (Rassmann identifies *Island* as derived from Isa, a god-

dess of the under-world, probably the same as Holda, and *not* as Iceland.)

In the folk-songs current in Denmark and the Färöe Isles, Brynhild is represented as dwelling on the *Glasberg,* up the glittering sides of which none but Sigurd can ride.

Now, the Glasberg is well known to students of German folk-lore as the abode of departed spirits, *i. e.* the other-world, and, as such, connected with the mountain in which Holda, who is goddess of the dead, lives. It is no abode of terror, but of rest and bliss; though the dwellers in it would often gladly return to this world, but are unable of themselves to do so. Rassmann identifies the Glasberg alike with the Gnita-heide, as mentioned above, and with the island Glid, mentioned in Anglo-Saxon Chronicles as the abode of departed spirits, the original root signifying *glanz, freude, wonne.*

That the souls of the blessed dead rested in an island in the Western seas was a very general belief in early times, and is also familiar to us through the Arthurian legend, which represents the departed king as dwelling in Avalon, the Welsh equivalent for the Irish *Tir na n, og,* "the land beyond the waves," the Celtic Paradise. Between Avalon and Britain there existed, as we find from the Grail legends, an undoubted, though not altogether clear, connection; and later on, Avalon became identified with *Glastonbury,* though why it did so it is not easy to decide. The etymology of Glastonbury seems to be still a matter of uncertainty; and though experts incline apparently more to a Celtic than to a Saxon

source, it does not seem impossible that there is a connection between the Glasberg and Glastonbury, and that the identification of the latter with Avalon was due to some tradition originally connected with the place. In any case Brynhild's residence on the Glasberg, and on an island in at least close proximity to Britain, leaves little doubt as to the nature of her home.

The castle, too, in which the Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied place her is undoubtedly an under-world dwelling; the manner in which Siegfried forces his entrance in the first-named version clearly indicates this. The doors are the portals of Hades, which the hero must either burst by main force, or spring his steed over (as Hermodur does when he rides to Hel to bring Baldur back). At first the surroundings of Hel seem to have been a high hedge or thicket of thorns, but eventually the under-world dwelling became a fortress, guarded, as fortresses are on earth, with towers and iron-bound portals. This magic castle, typical of the other-world, appears frequently in the Grail Romances, and a visit to such a castle is among the achievements ordinarily ascribed to Gawain, one of the oldest heroes of this cycle.

In the most popular form in which the legend has descended to us, the folk-tale of "The Sleeping Beauty," the other-world signification of the original tale has become greatly obscured; the flame which surrounds Gerda and Sigrdrifa has vanished, and the thorn-hedge, once one with the flame, alone remains, and has blossomed into a thicket of roses. The sleep-thorn has become the spindle, and the maiden no longer slumbers alone, but

surrounded by all her courtiers. We have changed the ending, too, and, instead of the fateful separation of hero and heroine, only to be reunited amid the flames of the funeral pyre, in the time-honoured language of fairy-tale, they "live happy ever after."

For o'er the hills and far away,
  Beyond their utmost purple rim,
Across the night, beyond the day,
  Thro' all the world she followed him.

Chapter V.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG.

ARGUMENT.

The drama opens with a scene between the three Norns, who indicate by their dark prophecies, and the breaking of the cord they weave, the fate of the hero, and the approaching fall of Walhalla.

Siegfried leaves Brünnhilde, having pledged himself to her, and given her the Ring as a love-token, and arrives at the hall of the Gibichungs, Gunther and Gutrune, with their half-brother Hagen, who is really son to Alberich.

Hagen, well aware of the task which his father has imposed upon him of regaining the Ring, urges Gunther and Gutrune to marriage, telling them that in Brünnhilde and Siegfried they will find their fitting mates.

On Siegfried's arrival, Gutrune, acting under Hagen's advice, presents him with a magic drink, the effect of which is not only to inspire him with a sudden passion for the Gibichung princess, but to make him entirely forget Brünnhilde, whom he offers to assist Gunther in winning as his wife, claiming the hand of Gutrune as his reward, and the two heroes swear an oath of blood-brotherhood.

Brünnhilde, awaiting the return of Siegfried, is visited by the Valkyrie, Waltraute, who tells her of the dismay in Walhalla, caused by Wotan's acceptance of the coming Götterdämmerung, and refusal to make .any effort to avert it Nothing can save the gods except the return of the fatal Ring to its original guardians, the Rhine Maidens. Brünnhilde, who has now fully accepted the fate Wotan has prepared for her, and accounts Siegfried's love a greater treasure than her lost divinity, refuses to part with the Ring, Siegfried's love-token, and Waltraute leaves her in indignation. Siegfried, in the shape of Gunther, which he has assumed by means of the Tarn-helm, penetrates again through the flames to Brünnhilde, and, in spite of her struggles, forces the Ring from her, and compels her to accept him as her husband, keeping faith with Gunther by placing the sword, Nothung, between them.

In the mist of the morning, Siegfried and Gunther change places, and Brünnhilde follows the latter to the hall of the

Gibichungs, where she is met by Siegfried and Gutrune. She at once accuses Siegfried of having betrayed both herself and Gunther, and he swears his innocence on Hagen's spear. Hagen offers to avenge Brünnhilde, and Siegfried's death is determined upon.

A hunting-party is arranged, and Siegfried, who has become separated from the others, is confronted by the three Rhine Maidens, who entreat him to give them back the Ring, and on his refusal foretell that he will die that day. Siegfried refuses to give them through fear what he would not yield freely, and the maidens vanish.

Siegfried is joined by the others, and during the following meal, under the influence of a drink given by Hagen, he relates the story of his slaying the dragon and winning Brunnhilde. Two ravens fly out of the thicket behind him, and Siegfried, turning to look at them, is struck to the heart by Hagen.

Siegfried's body is borne to the hall, where Hagen claims the Ring as his property, both as the avenger of perjury and heir to the rightful owner, Alberich, but is opposed by Gunther. The two fight, and Gunther falls.

At Brünnhilde's command a funeral pyre is raised on which the body of Siegfried is laid, and Brünnhilde, after proclaiming love alone, not gold nor glory, to be the enduring good, mounts her horse, Grane, and spurs it into the flames.

The waves of the Rhine rise, and the maidens, summoned by Brünnhilde's last words, draw the Ring from Siegfried's hand and disappear into the waves, dragging with them Hagen, who has endeavoured to frustrate them. A glow in the Northern sky tells of the fall of Walhalla and the "twilight of the gods."

THE scene of the awakening of Brünnhilde, fully discussed in our last chapter, forms the central point of the drama; from this moment the shadow of impending fate looms darker and more imminent, and the tragedy—for such it now unmistakably becomes—moves rapidly to its close. And here we cannot but feel that the final stages in the hero's career suffer considerably by the compression necessary to bring them within the limits of time available for the drama. As in the case of Siegmund, so in that of his son, the character of the hero is necessarily and unfavourably affected by this compres-

sion; and as a sympathetic and picturesque presentment of the concluding scenes, the drama is distinctly inferior to either the Volsunga-saga or the Nibelungen-lied, which, in both instances, touch their highest point of excellence in their account of the hero's death and the circumstances which precede it.

With the opening of the drama we find ourselves once more in the world of mythology, in the company of the Three Norns, the Northern Fates. These three sisters, originally of divine origin, appear to have been anterior to the gods, and to have at first ruled their fate, even as later they weave and rule the fates of men. It is their task to tend Ygdrassil, the world-ash, and to refresh it with water from Urd's spring: Urd, or Wurd, being the name of the eldest Norn; the others, Verdandi and Skuld; the three signifying the Past, the Present, and the Future. Simrock considers that originally all three sisters were named *Wurd,* and that we have a reminiscence of this in Macbeth's "weird sisters."

Be this as it may, it is not difficult to find traces of the widespread nature of the belief in the Norns, and their connection with the affairs of men; a belief which survives to our day under a variety of more or less easily penetrated disguises.

The good fortune which it was in their power to bestow upon mortals, gradually, as the Christian faith gained ground in the North, and the mythical nature of the sisters became obscured, took the form of religious benefactions; throughout Germany, in Belgium, Switzerland, and further north, we find a constantly recurring

triad of sisters, generally dignified with the prefix of Saint, whose names, varying in different localities, can yet without much difficulty be connected with one or another of the fateful sisters, and whom students of mythology identify as being in reality Christianised versions of the Three Norns.

And if they survive in Christian tradition, they do so, much more unmistakably, in folk-lore and Märchen. Identical with the *Tria Fata* of the Celts, they have, through their name, become confused with the fairies; and first in their own form, then as fairies, we find them attendants on the cradles of heroes; foretelling, for the most part, good fortune, but often by the prophecy of the last Norn, who is generally a herald of evil. Thus, in the Nornagest-saga, the youngest sister foretells that the infant shall only live as long as the taper burning beside the cradle shall last; the eldest sister extinguishes the light and bids the mother guard it carefully; and it is only as an aged man of over three hundred years that, at the court of King Olaf Tryggvason, Nornagest lights the taper and expires with the expiring flame.

So when the Danish king Fridleif bare his new-born son to the temple of the Norns, the youngest sister cursed the child with the passion of avarice, thus marring the gifts bestowed upon him by her sisters. How, as fairies, they appear in the tale of the "Sleeping Beauty," the close connection of which with our legend has already been remarked, every reader will remember.

We may remark here that the number of the Norns,

as of the Valkyrie, varies; originally and generally three, they sometimes appear as seven, nine, or twelve.

The fact that they are undoubtedly connected by their name *fata* with fairies, and that their ordinary home is by Urd's spring, at the root of the ash, Ygdrassil, seems to show that there may also be a connection between the Norns and the water fairies who are met by the side of a fountain or stream, and in so many traditions are wedded to mortals.

In the drama the Norns appear in their original character, as interested in the fate of the gods, and the various indications of the approaching catastrophe are founded on mythological sources, most of which have been already referred to. The Eddaic poem, the Voluspa, which relates at length the signs and portents heralding the Götterdämmerung, ends each verse with the mysterious question, "Wisst Ihr was das bedeutet?" Wagner seems to have had this in his mind when he made each Norn conclude her speech with a similar question.

After the mysterious scene with the Norns, which prepares our minds for the tragical development of the story, the thread of the action is resumed with the parting between Siegfried and Brünnhilde, and the latter's gift of her horse, Grane, to the hero. The runes, with which the awakened Valkyrie in the legend instructs the hero, may be found in the "lay of Sigrdrifa," which has been incorporated in chapters xx. and xxi. of the Volsunga-saga. In this latter chapter, Sigrdrifa (or Brynhild) significantly warns Sigurd, "Good it were that hate fell not on thee from those of thy wife's house."

In making the horse, Grane, the gift of Brünnhilde, Wagner has followed the Thidrek-saga; though there Siegfried has been told by Mimir to ask for the steed, and apparently visits Brynhild for that purpose. In the Volsunga-saga the horse, though ostensibly the gift of King Hjalprek, ought rather to be considered that of Odin who directs Sigurd in his choice, and tells him that Grane is of the kin of Sleipnir, Odin's eight-legged steed. Wagner evidently intends us to consider the gift of the Valkyrie as of unearthly origin, and there is no doubt that Sigurd's horse *is* a divine steed.

Simrock connects the name *Grani* (a name by which Odin himself is occasionally designated) with *grane,* the old German word for the hair of the beard; and according to him the beard of the god and the mane of the horse would alike typify the sun-rays, and would again be connected with the golden corn or granum, the fruit of the sun. Regarded in this aspect, Grani (or Grane) becomes at once the horse of the sun-god, and, as such, identical with Freyr's steed which penetrates the "Waberlohe" surrounding Gerda's dwelling. There seems little doubt that this was the real object of Odin's gift—*i. e.* to enable the hero to reach the sleeping Valkyrie; and the fact that Wagner places the gift of the horse *after* the awakening of Brünnhilde is utterly destructive of the origin and meaning of this really characteristic feature of the story.

We now approach one of the most important parts of the saga, and that part which, as noted in the introductory chapter, has been seriously affected and modified by

historical influence. In no part of the drama has the enforced compression of the action told more severely upon the legend, which has been here stripped bare of all that lends grace and dignity to the story, and appears a mere skeleton of itself.

The father of the royal house, whose kingdom is on the banks of the Rhine, is here Gibich, a name which seems to be in root identical with Gjuki in the Volsunga-saga, and which Simrock tells us was occasionally borne by Odin; it may therefore indicate the originally unearthly nature of these kings.

There seems strong reason to believe that if we could reconstruct the original form of the legend we should find these characters, into whose power the hero falls, and who force him to a course of action which finally brings about his death at their hands, to be of as mythic an origin as Siegfried himself, symbolizing a power of darkness, as he does of light; but the introduction of the historical element into the legend, and the identification of these kings with rulers of the Burgundian Rhine kingdom, has completely obscured the original legend. Gunther or Gunnar, in particular, has probably been euhemerized out of all likeness to his mythical self, and *Hagen* alone bears evident traces of an other than mortal origin.

An interesting question is, are Gunther and his brothers to be considered as Nibelungs or not? The indications of the legend are somewhat confused, and, as noted earlier, it would seem that the name of Nibelung (or Niflung) is rather dependent on the possession of the Treasure; only in the Thidrek-saga are these kings Nib-

elungs throughout. That they are evil powers is certain, and it is generally admitted that it is really through his possession of the fatal Treasure that the hero falls under their influence; but the question is, is this influence due to their previous connection with the Treasure, or merely to the action of the curse on the hero, independent of any such connection on their part? The strongest argument for holding the first of these two alternatives to be the truth is the character of Hagen, whose opposition to the hero evidently lies at the very root of his being, and is part of the original *stoff* of the legend; but it is not by any means certain that Hagen *is* one of the Gibichungs or Gjukings at all. His connection with Gunther is, as we shall see, markedly variable, and it may be that it is he, and not Gunther, who really represents the original Rhine-king of the legend, whether that king were a Nibelung or not.

If we refer to the discussion of the original source of the gold in chapter iii. we shall find that the representatives of the Nibelungs were a father and two (or perhaps three) sons; and the collection of the Treasure due, apparently, to the skill or cunning of the father. With this outline, at the first glance, the family of the Rhine-kings seems to agree, *i. e.* there is a father and three sons —Gunther, Gernot, and Giselher, in the distinctively German versions; Gunnar, Hogni (or Hagen), and Guttorm in the Northern. In the Thidrek-saga Hagen is a half-brother, thus converting the evidently original number into four; in the Nibelungen-lied he is simply Gunther's "man." But, though at first sight these versions appear

to agree, there are two important modifications: first, the father of the Rhine-kings is a mere lay-figure, and certainly could not be compared with Hreidmar, of the earlier group; then, and more important, these Rhine-kings have always a sister who plays a very leading, eventually *the* leading, part in the development of the story, and who certainly appears to be of as mythical an origin as her rival, Brynhild. The witch-mother, who is so prominent a figure in the Volsunga-saga, is in all probability merely a duplication of the sister, whose name, Grimhild, she has taken; it seems most likely that in the original legend it was the maiden herself who was possessed of magical powers and used them to win the love of the hero. The compiler of the Volsunga-saga seems to have passed over the more unamiable traits of the daughter's character to the mother, as throughout his sympathies are evidently with Gudrun and Hogni, and he is bent on making out as good a case for them as he can; though the underlying fierceness of the original character of Sigurd's wife breaks through at the end with her murder of her sons.

The gradual development and modifications which the character of Kriemhild (or Gudrun) has undergone is one of the most important and interesting features of the legend as a whole. She is, of course, really a far more important character than Brynhild; but inasmuch as we are now only considering the Nibelungen myth in connection with its presentment in the Wagnerian Drama, it would be beside the mark to enter upon a discussion which would take up time and divert us from our primary

object. One cannot but regret, however, that, with such a wealth of material at his disposal, Wagner did not make more of the character of Gutrune; as it is, she is really too shadowy even to be a foil to Brünnhilde, who would rather have gained in interest had she had a more tangible rival in Siegfried's affections. On the whole, the action of the drama, and the necessary compression involved, presses very hardly on these Rhine-kings; the mother, who, if not always the imposing and fateful figure of the Volsunga-saga, is at least sympathetic and dignified, has been swept away; so has the father (a lesser loss); the younger brothers, fierce and headstrong sometimes but gallant and chivalrous, have also vanished; and of the whole group only Gunther and his sister remain, and they are mere puppets, tools under the sinister influence of Hagen. Gunther's dignity is not even saved by the fact that Hagen's conduct, as in the Nibelungen-lied, is dictated by his feudal devotion to his master's interests and care for his honour. Here Hagen, like Hal o' the Wynd, "fights for his own hand," and the fact that it is his own interest, and not Gunther's, that he has in mind, operates disastrously on both characters.

But it must be admitted that in a drama ending with the catastrophe of Siegfried's death it would be difficult to make Gunther a dignified character—he is so manifestly human, and, as such, so utterly overweighted by his semi-divine brother-in-law and wife. To do full justice to the character, one needs the closing scenes of his life, in which, a man among men, confronted with an inevitable fate, he rises to a pitch of heroic grandeur, and

meets his death with a courage and constancy which compel our admiration; Gunther in the "worm-close" is as grand a figure as legend can show. The fact seems to be that, whether there ever was a mythical Gunther or not, the character has now become so completely euhemerized, and so thoroughly identified with the historical Burgundian king, that he is out of keeping with the characters of the early part of the saga, who still retain strong traces of their mythical origin; and is therefore only to be understood when, in connection with the Fall of the Nibelungs, we find him in the surroundings coloured by his real history and proper to the character.

The deception of which Brünnhilde is the victim is, of course, difficult to reproduce adequately on the stage; the most poetical version of the incident, and that which certainly appears to be the oldest, is the version given by the Volsunga-saga, where by means of incantations Sigurd and Gunnar literally change shapes (as do Signy and the witch-woman). It is to be noted, however, that this change does not appear to extend to the eyes. Brynhild tells Sigurd that she "deemed she knew his eyes;" and Wagner hints at this in the drama. The fact seems to be that the eyes of the hero are a surviving trait of his originally divine nature, and that no mortal dare face them. Twice over Guttorm refrains his murderous hand, and will not smite Sigurd till his eyes are closed in slumber; and one cannot but suspect that the fact that in the German versions of the legend Siegfried is smitten *from behind,* was originally to be referred to this peculiarity, which, too, is evidently inherited by his children. The

Edda relates that when Swanhild, the daughter of Sigurd and Gudrun, was condemned by King Jormunrek to be trodden underfoot by horses, they were compelled to muffle her head in a cloth before the sentence could be carried out, as the horses dared not face her eyes; and there is, not improbably, a reminiscence of the power of Sigurd's glance at the root of the story told of Aslog's son, referred to in chapter iv.

The *Tarn-kappe,* which we find in the Nibelungen-lied, seems to be a later and *märchenhaft* attempt to explain the deception; the Thidrek-saga, which only requires that Brynhild be deceived during the hours of night, suggests no magical explanation—Gunther and Siegfried simply change garments, and the darkness apparently does the rest; but such a solution was not sufficient for the Nibelungen-lied, which requires that Brynhild be deceived during the trial of strength, as well as in the marriage-chamber.

The virtue of the *Tarn-kappe* (or Helm) is to make the wearer invisible, and to dower him with superhuman strength, *not* to enable him, as in the drama, to take the form of another man. The fact that the agent in the deception is a special talisman, and no longer runes, or incantations, as in the Volsunga-saga, seems to point to a later version; and the form assumed here by the talisman is probably due to the fact that there was a helmet of special virtue included in the Treasure. The Volsunga-saga speaks of the Helm of Awing (Ægirshelm), which had the power of smiting with terror all who beheld the wearer.

In the various stages through which the legend has passed, the relations between Sigurd and Brynhild, and the real nature of the wrong done by the hero, have become very much obscured. There is no doubt that they were originally betrothed to each other. That the betrothal was more than a mere exchange of vows seems most probable, both from the fact that the Northern versions knew the daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, and the version which both Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied give of the service rendered to Gunther by Siegfried—probably a reminiscence of the hero's original relations with Brynhild.

That Siegfried's apparent treachery was, in the first instance, unconscious is certain; and it seems more in accordance with the blameless character ascribed to the hero to believe that the account given by both Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied departs from the older version by separating the one betrayal into two, and making each a conscious and a voluntary act.

That Brynhild had a right to consider herself not merely Sigurd's betrothed, but his wife, seems clear. Here, Wagner seems in the main to have given the correct version of the story; but in finding in the desertion of Siegfried the cause which leads Brünnhilde to demand his death he has made a grave departure from the legend, and one which has a very unfortunate effect on the character of his heroine.

In every version of the legend, without exception, Brynhild does not bring about Siegfried's death in revenge for his desertion of her, but—and this is a very

important difference—in retaliation for his having betrayed her carefully guarded secret to his wife.

The Volsunga-saga makes this clear. Brynhild knows perfectly well that Sigurd was an unconscious agent in the betrayal—it was his "fate," and as such had been foreseen by her, and she is of a sufficiently generous character not to punish him, bitterly as she resents his conduct, for what she knows he was unable to prevent; but, womanlike, she revenges herself on his wife, and it is only when she discovers that Sigurd has put her in the power of her envied rival that her proud spirit finds the situation intolerable, and she demands his death as atonement for the last and *conscious* wrong.

That this is the correct version, and the one which lies at the root of both Thidrek-saga and Nibelungen-lied, is evident, as it is the only solution of Brynhild's otherwise enigmatic conduct. In the Thidrek-saga she calmly accepts Siegfried's cool explanation of his desertion—that she had no brother, and therefore a marriage with her was not to his advantage. In the Nibelungen-lied there is no statement of any previous connection between them, but her explanation of her tears at the sight of Kriemhild and Siegfried is quite inadequate, and is evidently only a poor substitute for the real and forgotten reason. But in each instance she keeps silence on what has passed *before* her marriage with Gunther, and bases her accusation of Siegfried on the ground of his betrayal of herself and Gunther to Kriemhild. Whatever the later compilers have forgotten, they have clearly retained the idea that in this, and not in the previous unconscious action, lay Siegfried's real sin against Brynhild.

In this, the true version of the story, it is impossible not to sympathise with Brynhild; but when, as in the drama, she sees that her former lover does not recognise her, and has absolutely forgotten everything connected with their meeting, instead of suspecting the real nature of the case, and keeping silence, she at once and *publicly* proclaims the nature of the relations between them (which surely a woman of the dignified character attributed to Brünnhilde would have died rather than do); she not only demands Siegfried's death, but freely tells Hagen where he may be mortally wounded, at which we feel revolted by her craving for such cruel revenge, and lack of all womanly feeling.

We can hardly acquit Wagner of having here made a grave mistake. Up to this point he has elected to follow the indications of the Volsunga-saga, and has determinedly identified his heroine with the Valkyrie Sigrdrifa, attributing to her a divine origin, and gifting her with divine wisdom. It is too much to demand of us that we shall suddenly dissociate this Brünnhilde from the prototype with whom she has been so closely connected, and, in defiance of all the indications of the legend, and up till now of the *drama,* believe that she really has *no* knowledge of how matters stand with Siegfried, that she shall remember her divine birth, and yet act with less than womanly dignity.

In the fact that it is she who reveals, and that of free will, Siegfried's vulnerable point, we have again a departure, and an unhappy one, from the original legend; there it is Kriemhild who betrays her husband, and that

in all innocence, believing that she is enabling Hagen to shield him more effectually—a most pathetic incident, and one which may be traced to a mythic source, and therefore probably formed part of the story in its earliest form.

It is throughout in accordance with the legend to represent Siegfried as utterly unconscious of his impending doom, relying too completely on the blood-brotherhood between himself and his wife's relations to dread any treachery on their part; but this unconsciousness is far more natural in the legend, where the hero has lived for years with the Rhine-kings on terms of brotherly affection, has aided them in their wars, received part of their kingdom, and has every reason to believe himself beloved and honoured, than in the drama, where his knowledge of Gunther is of the slightest, and where Hagen's mysterious bearing and refusal to share in the oath of brotherhood would surely have put him upon his guard. But probably we ought, both here and in the legend, to regard Siegfried as being, in Scotch parlance, "fey."

The warning of the Rhine-maidens was, of course, suggested by the similar warning addressed to Hagen in the German versions, though there Hagen accepts and believes it, in the spirit of grim fatalism which characterizes him throughout; though he revenges himself for the unwelcome truth by smiting off the head of the prophetess. In the account of Siegfried's death Wagner has followed the German tradition, which represents the hero as slain in the forest, and during a hunting expedition, rather than the Northern, where he is slain in his bed.

The part of the Nibelungen-lied which relates the death of Siegfried is admittedly one of the finest portions, if not the finest, of the poem; and there is an irresistible pathos in the contrast between the light-hearted unconsciousness of the hero and the dark treachery plotted against him. Siegfried is never more brilliant, more joyous, more utterly *alive* than in the moments preceding his death. More successful in the chase than his companions, he brings to the appointed trysting-place not only the dead trophies of his skill, but a live bear fastened to his saddle-bow, which he first lets loose among the terrified serving-men, and then himself overtakes and kills single-handed.

Annoyed at the lack of wine, he upbraids Hagen with the petulance of offended dignity; "if they did not treat the hunters better he would not be their hunting comrade again; he had well merited better treatment!" But with easy good-humour he forgets his annoyance as soon as Hagen suggests that there is a spring at hand, and a well-timed compliment to his swiftness of foot finds him ready to rise to the bait, and eager to give a proof of his vaunted skill. The very fact that he is so unsuspicious, so trusting, and easy to be deceived, makes the treachery of Gunther and Hagen appear all the blacker; and though, in fact, Siegfried in the Nibelungen-lied is really more guilty than Sigurd in the Volsunga-saga, yet the childlike gaiety and unconsciousness of the character make one less willing to find an excuse for Hagen and the vindictive woman who spurs him on.

Without a thought that he is laying a snare for him-

self, Siegfried challenges Gunther and Hagen to race him to the spring, volunteering himself to carry the weight of hunting dress, shield, sword, and spear, while the other two lay aside their weapons and outer garments. Even thus burdened he easily outruns them, but with ready courtesy stands aside till Gunther has drunk first, and, as he in his turn bends to drink, it is with his *own* spear, laid aside in trustful unconsciousness, that Hagen smites him to the heart. As in the drama, he lifts his shield to fling at Hagen, and in the poem he carries out the action and smites his murderer to the ground.

The scorn of the dying man for the treachery which has thus taken him unarmed, and at a disadvantage, is very fine, and with contemptuous coldness he bids Gunther cease his lamentations. But a softer mood comes over him at the thought of his wife, and there is a reproachful pathos in his appeal to Gunther; if he *can* keep faith with any one, he would fain commit Kriemhild to his care. His last thoughts are for her: "ne'er was a greater wrong done to a woman through her love."

The death-scene in the drama, fine as it undoubtedly is, is yet inferior in beauty and pathos to this.

And here we must discuss the question, one much debated by scholars: Where was Siegfried really killed? In his bed, as in the Northern legend, or in the wood, as the Thidrek-saga, and Nibelungen-lied represent? Rassmann does not hesitate to say that the Northern version represents, without doubt, the oldest form of the story, and with this Edzardi in his preface to Von der Hagen's translation of the Volsunga-saga agrees; on the

other hand, Lichtemberger points out that the variation in the manner of the hero's death may be accounted for by the differences existing between the countries and the peoples where the saga found a home. Thus it would be more natural for the Germans to represent Siegfried as slain in a forest, forests abounding in Germany, and the Germans being a hunting people; while the sparsely wooded tracts of Iceland and the long nights of the North would make it more natural for the Northern sagamen to represent him as slain in the house and in his sleep. This remark appears very natural, and would certainly lead to the conclusion that, the legend being in the main originally German, the German version would of necessity be the older of the two; and this opinion is supported by the fact that even in the North this version of the story which held Sigurd to have been slain in daylight and in the open was not unknown. One of the many Eddaic songs dealing with the legend represents him as killed "southward, on the banks of the Rhine;" another as assassinated while riding to the Thing. A prose note to the first, which says, "Others say Sigurd was slain in his bed, but German men tell that he was killed in the forest," is significant as showing that there were at an early period two versions of the legend, and that the *German* was such as it has descended to us.

It is noteworthy, too, on the hypothesis that the Volsunga-saga has departed from the original tradition, that the version there given of Gudrun's dream, foreshadowing the death of Sigurd, certainly points to his being slain in the open.

This opinion, probable enough when we only consider the versions as they stand, becomes much strengthened when we take into consideration the originally mythic nature of the hero. That Siegfried originally represented a sun-god there can be practically no doubt; we have already shown that the story of his winning Brynhild (Sigrdrifa) is based upon the myth of Freyr and Gerda, and the circumstances of his death and burial seem as certainly to be connected with Baldur. It will be remembered that the gods, terrified at the portents which point to some misfortune befalling this best-loved of the Asas, extort an oath from all creation to do him no harm, the mistletoe, which they deem too insignificant to be dangerous, alone excepted. This done, they amuse themselves by throwing missiles at Baldur, who remains uninjured, invulnerable to all weapons.

Loke, in the guise of an old woman, goes to Fricka (as Hagen does to Kriemhild), and asks her if all created things have taken the oath, winning from her, in all innocence, the admission that the mistletoe has been excepted. Armed with a twig of the shrub, Loke goes to the blind god, Hödur (*Hagen* is always represented as being blind of one eye), and tells him he will guide his hand to take part in the diversion of the gods. Hödur throws the mistletoe, which enters Baldur's temple and kills him. The body of the dead god is laid on a ship which is set alight, and Odin places on the finger of his dead son, as he lies on the funeral pyre, the ring Draupnir, from the pure gold of which every ninth night there drop eight shavings of the precious metal, though the

ring itself never becomes less. The resemblance between Draupnir and the ring of the Nibelungen Hoard has often been commented upon. Baldur's wife, Nanna, dies of grief, and is burnt on the funeral pyre with her husband. The analogy existing between the account of Baldur's death and that of Siegfried's leaves no doubt that the hero was originally a sun or spring-god, even as Freyr and Baldur, and was identified in turn, now with the one, now with the other of these deities.

Now, it is a noticeable fact that the death of a divine, or semi-divine, hero is in many mythologies brought about during a hunting expedition and by means of a *wild boar;* a golden boar is in Northern mythology one of the symbols of the sun-god. There is a curious story of a certain Hackelbrand, a mythical individual, identified by some scholars with Odin, by others with Baldur, who on the eve of the hunt dreams of himself as engaged in a deadly struggle with an overpowering enemy. The next day they pursue and kill a mighty wild boar, and Hackelbrand, recognising the enemy of his dream, strikes the dead animal with his foot, exclaiming, "Now strike if thou canst!" when the sharp tusk of the boar pierces his foot and causes a mortal wound. The Egyptian god, Osiris, was slain by his enemy Typhon, in the guise of a wild boar; and it was a boar which caused the death of Adonis.

Remembering these facts, and that Siegfried is undoubtedly connected with the sun-gods of the North, Hagen's explanation of the cause of Siegfried's death in the Thidrek-saga, "We hunted a wild boar, and that boar

gave him his death," becomes curiously significant; whether Wagner had this connection in his mind or not, one cannot say, but he has happily retained this trait in the drama.

We have already noted as a peculiarity of the Thidrek-saga, that, though later in compilation, and inferior in literary value to the Northern version, it nevertheless retains distinct traces of an older form of the legend than that preserved by the Volsunga-saga, though this older form is often obscured by the evident anxiety of the compiler to harmonize the German version with that popular in the North. Thus we find that, though he represents Siegfried as slain in the wood, he relates how the hero's dead body was brought home and laid in the bed beside his wife—an act of brutality on the part of the murderers (who in the Nibelungen-lied only lay the corpse outside Kriemhild's door) apparently due to his desire not to entirely omit the Northern form of the story.

The conclusion seems to be that, judging from mythical analogy, and the testimony of the German versions, the original scene of Siegfried's death must have been a wood or forest, and the occasion a hunting expedition; and it may well be that, before the story of this Aryan hero became so closely entwined with the Northern myth of the fatal Nibelungen Hoard, the cause of his death was the traditional wild boar. But the fact that Siegfried early became identified with Baldur would introduce another element into the story, and this, fitting more easily into the framework of the Nibelungen legend, which demanded that the death of the hero be due to the action of

a *conscious* agent, and a deadly enemy, finally entirely displaced the more primitive version.

It seems impossible to judge the question fairly without consideration of the strong mythical elements in the hero's character; and equally impossible, having taken this element into account, to avoid the conclusion that the German versions followed by the drama are really representative of the original facts of the case.

But if there be a difference of opinion as to the scene of Siegfried's death, there can be but little controversy as to who was his murderer. Both the German versions agree in assigning this *rôle* to Hagen; the Volsunga-saga alone represents Hogni (Hagen) as resolutely opposed to the deed, as it is also alone in making Gunnar survive Hogni; though it is in accordance with the Thidrek-saga in representing Gudrun as carrying out her vengeance by the aid of Hogni's son, who here bears the significant name of Niblung. As remarked before, the Northern version makes Hogni Gunnar's brother, whereas in the Thidrek-saga he is but Gunther's half-brother, the son of an elf (as in the drama); and in the Nibelungen-lied he is Gunther's "man," and only a distant relation.

In the German versions Hagen is always represented as of a fierce and awe-inspiring aspect; his face is pale as ashes, his hair and beard grizzled, and he has but one eye. The Thidrek-saga accounts for his grim appearance by the story of his supernatural birth; but the whole description of Hagen points him out as originally and essentially the direct opposite of Siegfried, whose golden armour, beauty of countenance, and joyous disposition

render him the object of universal love and admiration, as Hagen is of dislike and dread. The one is manifestly the representative of a power of light, the other of darkness.

Nevertheless, Hagen knows more of Siegfried than either Gunther or his fellow-courtiers know. When the young hero appears at Worms the Burgundians are all in doubt as to his identity; it is Hagen who names him, and who relates his early exploits, the slaying of the dragon and the winning of the Nibelungen Hoard. With this latter it is impossible to doubt that Hagen is very closely connected; it is worthy of note that in all the versions the Treasure eventually comes into his hands, and it is *he* who is the agent in consigning it to its final place of concealment. In the Nibelungen-lied this connection with the treasure is specially apparent; after the death of Siegfried (who, curiously enough, never seems to care particularly for the Treasure—as a rule he wins it accidentally and without set desire on his part; the Volsunga-saga alone represents him as knowing of the gold beforehand, and being actuated by the motive of winning it), Hagen watches jealously over the gold, and deprives Kriemhild of all access to the Treasure before he finally hides it; and in two instances it is *his* son who works out the final curse of the gold by slaying Etzel, or Atli, who would fain possess it.

It is true that Hagen nowhere slays Siegfried with the apparent object of possessing the Hoard himself, but always out of loyalty to his sovereign's wife, and care for his sovereign's honour; and this *motif* is specially insisted

upon in the Nibelungen-lied. But this presentation of the legend is so strongly coloured throughout by ethical ideas, and the German conception of "Treue," that the original conception has undoubtedly undergone considerable modification.

Taking into consideration the importance which in every version of the story is assigned to Hagen, an importance which in the Nibelungen-lied goes near to making him the equal of Siegfried in dignity and interest; the obscurity which overhangs his origin and relation to Gunther; his strange appearance; and the fact that he is invariably the last holder of the Treasure,—we cannot but conclude that we have here a survival of one of the original figures of the legend, the hereditary opponent and foe of the hero, and therefore most probably the representative of the powers from whom he won the gold (*not* the rightful owner of the gold, for Hagen himself is subject to the curse); in other words, that Hagen really is, as represented in the drama, the survival of the original Nibelungs. That he may be even older than this, and as Hödur, Baldur's murderer, part of the original mythic groundwork of the saga, is highly probable. As far back as we can put the personified opposition of light and darkness, so far back may we put the real root of the enmity between Siegfried and Hagen; the one character is as old as the other.

The account given of Hagen's birth by the Thidrek-saga, which account has been adopted in the drama, seems more likely to have been an attempt to explain the supernatural character, which still in a measure attached to

Hagen, than an authentic tradition. Certainly the version given in the drama is incorrect; Alberich and Hagen, so far from being father and son, are, in the very essence of their being, utterly opposed to each other. Alberich, or Elberich, is, as his name indicates, an elf or albe. These beings are divided into two classes, Lichtalben and Schwarzalben, and Simrock points out that this prefix indicates no difference either in their character or their colour; their common name, "Albe," is connected with *albus,* "white," and both classes are of fair aspect and kindly disposition; but one, the Lichtalben, have their home in the sun, the other, the Schwarzalben, in the earth. The whole character of Alberich, as depicted in German legend, bears out this remark of Simrock's. His home is certainly in the earth, as certainly he is *not* a Schwarzalbe in the sense Wagner gives us to understand.

The poem of *König Ortnit,* a work apparently of the early part of the thirteenth century, gives a very charming presentment of Alberich, and it seems not unlikely that this poem has coloured the story of Hagen as given in the Thidrek-saga. King Ortnit, on the eve of his departure for the East to win as his bride a Moorish princess of far-famed beauty, receives from his mother a ring, which he is told to guard carefully, and bidden by her to ride in a certain direction, where he will meet with adventures. He obeys her, and comes to a flowery meadow, overshadowed by a linden, beneath which a lovely child apparently some three or four years old lies asleep. Ortnit, thinking this to be a strayed child, takes it in his arms, when he receives a staggering blow on the chest,

and finds to his surprise that this apparent infant is possessed of more than the strength of a full-grown man. After a struggle between them the child reveals himself as Alberich, king of the elves, and Ortnit's real father, only visible to him by means of the ring his mother had given him. He presents his son with a magnificent suit of armour, and promises him his aid in winning the Moorish princess, a promise which he faithfully keeps.

It is in this character of Elf-king that Alberich became known in France, where his name has been modified to *Oberon!* Certainly the idea we attach to Oberon is widely different from that suggested by Wagner's Alberich, but it is undoubtedly more in accordance with original tradition.

The early part of the Thidrek-saga represents Alberich as a dwarf-king, through whose instrumentality Dietrich of Bern wins his armour and the sword, Nagel-ring; but here, though not an unkindly character, he is represented as a skilful thief, an evident confusion with *Elbegast,* or *Alegast,* another elf or dwarf, who was a famous thief. Whether this latter is the same as the mythical Nasterthief, *Agaz,* referred to by the Meistersingers, is not clear, but in the *Waltherius,* a work of the tenth century, Hagen's father is called Agazi, which Lachmann identifies with Agaz. The Thidrek-saga nowhere makes *Alberich* Hagen's father, and his connection with the Nibelungen-lied seems entirely to depend on his well-known character as guardian of a treasure, though there he guards it for another, and not, as more correctly, for himself.

It was probably a reminiscence of the well-known tale of King Ortnit, combined with the fact that Alberich was already connected with the Nibelungen-lied, which influenced Wagner in his choice of Hagen's father; but it cannot be denied that the character of Alberich as represented in the *Ring* does a grave injustice to a very graceful and charming figure of German legend.

The fine incident in the drama, where the dead man's hand rises to repel Hagen's intended theft of the ring, was doubtless suggested by the scene in the Nibelungen-lied where, as Siegfried lies in state in the Minster, Kriemhild demands, in accordance with a well-known mediæval superstition, that Gunther and Hagen, who have stoutly denied any share in the hero's death (attributing it to robbers), shall approach and touch the bier; and at Hagen's touch the wounds bleed afresh, thus making his guilt manifest to all. Gutrune's ready abandonment of her claim to Siegfried, at Brünnehild's demand, is, though in accordance with the shadowy *rôle* assigned to her in the drama, utterly at variance with the legend, where the description of the bereaved wife's despair forms an important feature in every version.

Some critics have held that it is the measureless grief of Gudrun, to which the Northern saga has given such magnificent expression, that spurs Brynhild on to her act of self-murder; it is the only way in which she can triumph over her hated rival, and win Sigurd for her own.

In both the German versions of the legend Brynhild disappears from the scene after Siegfried's death; her

vengeance sated, and her outraged dignity appeased, she has nothing more to do with the action of the story. But it is undoubtedly far more in accordance with the mythical origin of the character to make her die, as does Baldur's wife, with the man she has loved so fiercely.

It is impossible to deny the grandeur of this closing scene of the *Götterdämmerung,* but the grandeur of Brünnhilde is that of the Valkyrie and not of the woman. She may proclaim love to be the one eternal, enduring good; she may announce herself as having passed, as a woman, through suffering to knowledge; but it is impossible not to feel that the love which makes eventually for possession and not for renunciation, at the cost of shame and suffering to the loved one, is *not* the highest love, and that Brünnhilde, *as a woman,* had a great deal more to learn! Practically, the philosophical lesson of the drama, the renunciation of the will accepted by Wotan, is rejected by Brünnhilde, who in her final action is undoubtedly and exclusively actuated by the desire of eternal union with, and possession of, her beloved Siegfried.

And here, as the Rhine-maidens claim once more their long-lost heritage, and the flames which denote the completion of the curse of the gold and the fall of Walhalla and its gods light up the scene, the great drama finds its fitting close; and we who have followed the action step by step from its commencement may pause and ask whether the form in which Wagner has cast the great legend of the North is to be accepted as a true representation of its original form. Regarded from some aspects,

it may certainly be contended that the version given by the drama, as far as it goes, does represent what was probably the original shape of the story more accurately than any *one* of the versions from which Wagner drew, and that a correct dramatic instinct has led him to combine these older features which are not the special property of any one version, but are elsewhere found apart from each other: *e.g.* that he was right in representing the hero as brought up in the solitude of the wood, and in ignorance of his parentage, as in the Thidrek-saga, and in combining that with his awakening of the Valkyrie, the special property of the Volsunga-saga; right, too, in representing Hagen as closely connected with the Treasure—a real act of reconstruction, as this part of the story had become completely obscured, though the *means* by which the connection is established do not approve themselves as consonant with the primitive form; and right in selecting, out of the conflicting versions of Siegfried's death, that which is favoured by the German compilers, and agrees best with the mythical origin of the hero.

That, as a whole, this great work, in which Wagner's aim was wider, if not higher, than in his other dramas, is not his greatest success, must be admitted, but the reason lies to the full as much with the material to be moulded as with the hand of the moulder. A tradition so colossal in its proportions, so *urweltlich* in its origin, so extended in its ramifications, and so obscure in its details, could hardly be brought into any form which should represent swiftly and coherently the facts of the

story, deal with the hidden meaning of its mysterious action, and do no injustice to the legend by the omission of much which is of importance. As a matter of fact, it would have needed not one Tetralogy alone, but two, if not three, to deal adequately with the source of the Hoard, the Life and Death of Siegfried, the vengeance on his murderers, and final loss of the Treasure; and we can hardly blame Wagner if we find the narrow limits of the one scarcely sufficient for the purpose; it was well that the work should be done, and none but he could have done it.

In the light of this twentieth century resuscitation of the great Teutonic hero, the words of the old saga-man have a quaintly prophetic ring when, speaking of Siegfried, the compiler of the Thidrek-saga says: "And therefore were his arms gold-inwrought because he surpassed all other men in dignity, and nobleness, and all beauty; yea, even in the old sagas wherein men tell of the strongest, and most famous, and most free-handed of all heroes and princes: and his name goes abroad in all tongues from the North even to the Greek-land sea, and so shall it be so long as the world endures."

Legends Kindred to That of the Volsungs.

ASLOG.

Chapter I.

During prehistoric times in ancient Scandinavia, when the land was divided into a number of little principalities, over each of which a chief or king ruled, generally at war with his neighbour, the liege of the bordering state, there lived and ruled a famous family of chiefs called the house of Volsung. Of these Sigurd Fafnirsbane, or Snake-Killer, was the most renowned; he was espoused to the warlike but beautiful Amazon Brynhild, whom he had liberated from the charmed imprisonment of that aforenamed mythical huge snake, which had held her enthralled in a deep trance for a long time. The issue of this union was a little daughter, whom they called Aslog. However, the great warrior soon afterwards visited the court of King Gjuké, whose daughter Gudrun became enamoured of the heroic Snake-Killer. Her mother, Queen Chriemhild, noticing this, and being skilled in the black arts, prepared a charmed draught, which the unsuspecting Sigurd quaffed, with the result that he became inflamed with love of the Princess, and, faithless to his betrothed Brynhild, married Gudrun. But her brother Gunnar was desirous of wedding the abandoned Brynhild, so far famed for beauty, strength and valour, and persuaded Sigurd to lend him his horse Grane, the noble

steed—noble indeed, for he is said to have measured twelve feet in height, and was not to be conquered by either fire or sword. Gunnar mounted this mighty charger, to plunge through the flames with which the dragon had surrounded Brynhild's castle. But, lo! the horse refused to obey the brave rider, and the Saga tells that Sigurd lent him his own apparition, that is, exchanged bodies with him for the time, so as to effect a passage through the fiery wall for the new suitor. This mythical trick succeeded, and the faithful Brynhild welcomed her truant lover, as she naturally thought he was, and then the nuptials were completed—and thus she married Gunnar in the guise of Sigurd.

One day, some time afterwards, when Gudrun and Brynhild went into a limpid stream that flowed hard by the castle, inhabited in common by all the members of the Volsung clan, to wash their loose flowing hair, Gudrun, who was of a spiteful temper, began scoffing at her sister-in-law, saying that she herself was compelled to wade further into the stream that no drops of water that had laved Brynhild's hair might bespatter and contaminate her own tresses, which she weened they certainly would, as Brynhild was only an Amazon and not a princess. To this the insulted wife of Gunnar retorted that she was of royal descent; but the vicious Gudrun railed at the inferiority of Gunnar, her own brother, to the hero of her own choice, the far-famed Sigurd Fafnirsbane, and to the astounded Brynhild laid bare the whole secret whereby she had been beguiled into a union with Gunnar whilst assuming the garb and corporeal presence of Sigurd.

The injured Amazon, who now saw she had been defrauded of him she loved best, her betrothed lover, and tricked into wedlock with a man she did not love, resolved upon revenge. She easily persuaded Guttorm, another member of the Volsung family, and who was jealous of Sigurd's great fame as a hero, to murder her faithless royal lover in his sleep, and thus revenge herself upon him, and Gudrun, who had erst deprived her of him. Guttorm performed this dark deed of blood, and murdered the sleeping man, and even Sigurd's little son, a babe of three years; but he also met his own death at the hand of his victim in the hour of his diabolical triumph. But when the revenge was accomplished, and Brynhild saw her dead lover cold and motionless at her feet, her heart was softened, and repentance came in utterings of deepest lamentations; words of consolation fell unheeded on her conscience-stricken spirit, and she fell upon her sword, pierced to the heart; and thus the proud Amazon followed her lover to the Halls of Valhalla, and her corpse was placed on the funeral pile of Sigurd, consumed by the same flames, and their ashes mingled in the same urn. But Atlé, the brother of Brynhild, sought and obtained the hand of Gudrun, the widowed Megara. When, after some time, she had borne him two sons, he invited her two brothers, Gunnar and Hogné, King Gjuké's sons, to celebrate the event with a feast. He did this purposing to avenge Brynhild.

The two royal guests came suspecting nothing, but Atlé, as cruel as he was treacherous, caused the palpitating heart to be torn from Gunnar's breast; and the

younger brother, Hogné, he ordered to be flung alive into a pitful of venomous snakes. Pitying people, however, threw a harp to the captive in his loathsome prison, but as he had his arms tied behind him, he could only touch the vibrating strings with his toes, which he did, with the effect that he charmed his fell executioners, all but one, which twisted itself around his naked body until it reached his breast, and stung his heart, so that death speedily followed.

When Gudrun became aware of the cruel fate which had befallen her two brothers, she raved, mad with grief; and killed her own two innocent babes, the children of Atlé.

When her dastardly husband with pomp and ceremony celebrated the funeral obsequies of his two victims, Gudrun, his spouse, brought him two beautiful cups, seemingly wrought of ivory, with golden brims, and filled with wine, urging him to pledge the memory of his two brothers-in-law. When he had complied with her request, she told him, with fiendish glee, while passion almost overpowered her, that the goblets were made of the skulls of their own two young children, and that thus she had avenged the death of her two brothers on the father of her own children. With this she rushed from the banqueting hall, frantic with rage and grief, only to return in the dead of night to set fire to the house in which the king slept, and in which conflagration he and his nearest retainers perished.

Chapter II.

Dearly loved at the court of Sigurd, there lived an exiled king called Heimer, who was the accepted scald or bard of this chief and hero; and when Sigurd and Brynhild met their untimely end, the old kingly bard took their little daughter Aslog, then only a few years of age, and hastened into other petty states, to seek refuge and save the only surviving child of her race from the general carnage which raged amongst her infuriated kinsfolk. Better to conceal his infantile charge, he had a large harp constructed, in which he was able to hide the child.

And now began a period of strange adventures in the lone and wild woods through which their course lay. Sometimes, when far from the habitations of men, the old harper would allow his little darling to run by his side gathering flowers and berries from the wayside.

One evening, towards sunset, when Heimer was playing on his harp to a goodly throng of listeners that had gathered from a small hamlet whose cots lay scattered in a glen in the mighty woods, the clear manly voice of the aged minstrel rose in accents liquid and sonorous to the accompaniment of the harp, for he sang the heart-stirring lay about the love and fate of brave king Sigurd and his beloved Brynhild, the beauteous and faithful Amazon, who killed herself for grief with her own sword; the eager audience—of whom some were lying on the ground, while others standing formed a ring around—looked at each other with amazement; for as the old man related in song, with almost inspiration, the touch-

ing story, they thought the very harp responded with sobs and stifled cries to the burden of the piteous tale.

He was indeed a wonderful harper who could make his very instrument echo the bitter grief that each felt within himself. Mellow tones seemed at last to soothe the awakened spirit of the harp, and then the old man departed from the wondering group, and soon betook himself with his instrument to a lonely path leading towards the bay.

The moon shone out and threw a mystic glamour over the forest scene. Then King Heimer stopped; his mien still betrayed a king, though despoiled of all save the nobility of soul within, and of which his whole bearing seemed conscious. He opened the foot of the harp and lifted out his little charge, Aslog, who had fallen asleep within, overpowered with grief at the recollection of her lost parents which the song had evoked in her loving and childish heart.

It was a cold evening, and the stars were out; so the old man bethought himself that he had better warm little Aslog in his embrace. Soon, locked in his arms, she looked up into his face and leaned her head against his cheek, when her silent tears trickled down into his long white beard, and lay like gems reflecting the silvery glimmer of the moon-beams which like a halo played round the group. "Hush, my little one, you have me still who loves you, and the good god Balder, Odin's most beloved son, the god of Light and Song. He will protect you when I am dead and gone. Do you know, child, those rustics and warriors who listened to my song about

Sigurd and Brynhild (may Balder bless their union in Valhalla!)—they, simple folk, thought the harp bewitched, because you muled and wailed, little one. Do not do so again, but cheer up; we will soon arrive at a place of refuge and safety, where we will find friends that love us. If you weep in the harp to my playing, and bewitch the listeners, I shall have to call you my little witch, and you would not like that, King Sigurd's daughter! The old man had to sing out of tune to drown your sobs; give me now a kiss and say you love me as much as ever, though I won't let you cry. *You* cry indeed! the daughter of the famous hero and Amazon! Oh no, we will have no more tears now, only love and song. I see a lonely cot in the distance, for a spare light is twinkling invitingly. Now you must retire into your hiding-place for the night; in the cot it will be warm and quiet, and to-morrow at dawn we will proceed on our way, and then you will have something to eat." Another loving kiss, the blessing of the night, and the door was closed upon little Aslog, the fugitive princess child, a little prisoner cradled in music. The old man now resumed his staff, and descended the hill towards the sea.

Soon he reached the hut, and entering saw an old woman, who was alone at home. He asked to be permitted to stay there during the night, and that she would befriend him with something to satisfy his hunger. Heimer was weary and cold, but it was with difficulty that he persuaded the old woman to light the wood in the big open fireplace; at last, when a cheery blaze crackled among the twigs and branches, and Heimer stretched out

his stiff and weary limbs, the woman's manner suddenly changed, and she became quite cheerful and friendly, for when the aged wanderer held out his hands to warm them at the genial flames, she discovered that he had a precious golden ring encircling his arm. It was the custom of the times to break pieces off for barter and for purchases. And when she went near the harp she discovered a piece of embroidered costly stuff showing through an aperture, being at the opening of the little door. An evil thought entered her wicked heart; she perceived the stranger was in disguise, and she determined to get possession of his valuables.

When her old man soon after came home, he also hungry, weary, and shivering with cold, she told him in a whisper that in the press slept an aged wanderer, who as a beggar had asked for a night's lodging, but that he carried with him a large harp, in which was secreted a treasure of gold and valuable stuff. She urged him to murder the sleeping man, and then for the rest of their lives they would suffer from neither poverty nor want, nor would need to work any more. Aké, the husband, at first lent an unwilling ear to her proposal, but soon allowed himself to be persuaded, and the two wicked old creatures then speedily despatched their sleeping guest.

This crime accomplished, they eagerly hurried to the harp, and opened the little door of the instrument; but picture their surprise when out stepped a little girl, fair-haired and blue-eyed, just awakened by their bustle, and looking enquiringly around for her aged guardian. When little Aslog saw the sinister-looking couple, she ran fright-

ened to old Heimer, where he lay stretched on the floor; but when she could get no answer to her repeated calls upon his name, even though she pulled him by his hands and beard, as she was wont to do, she at last realized the fact that her beloved protector was dead, and would speak no more to her. She burst into bitter sobs, clinging to her silent friend, and flung her little arms around his neck and nestled in his clothes and silvery hair.

The inhuman old wretches considered for a short time whether they should not murder the little girl as well; but her despair was so touching, and her rare beauty so winning, that at last they resolved to spare her and adopt her as their own child. To silence inquisitive people who might call at their lonely hut, she was forthwith dressed in coarse grey baize, as was customary with the children of bondsmen.

Chapter III.

Aslog was compelled to remain with the old people, who called her Kraka, and she grew up to become a most beautiful maiden, slender, tall, and graceful, and with the inborn gait of a princess. All who saw her admired her wondrous beauty. Her native wit and wisdom were also most remarkable, though she spoke but seldom, and never with strangers, who therefore imagined she was deaf and dumb. Only with her grim wardens did she exchange a few words, when she was alone with them, and only then when their daily intercourse compelled her, for she loathed them from her inmost soul, because they had murdered

her beloved and venerated guardian, and detained her, the daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, a slave to wretched bondsmen. She repeated to herself every day the song Heimer had sung to his harp's accompaniment about her heroic parents, and thus she kept in vivid recollection for many long years the story of their loves and untimely fate.

There grew a tall pine tree by the hut, and when she looked upon its ever-verdant beauty, she thought of the stalwart form of her glorious father, and when she mirrored herself in the sylvan well, the recollection of her mother's features stood clear before her.

When Kraka had lived with the wicked old couple thus for more than twelve years—she was now sixteen years old—a Viking sailed into the creek one day with several galleys, and landed with his men near her home. It was no less a person than Ragnar Lodbrook, a hero famous all over the north for his deeds of daring. When the hut was observed by the mariners, some of the men were sent thither to bake some bread, of which provision they had been short for the last few days.

When the men returned with the hard-baked bread, it was found to be burned and wholly spoiled; upon this the Viking became greatly exasperated, and gave orders to have the negligent fellows severely punished. But the men tried to excuse themselves, and said that in the hut they had beheld such a beautiful maiden that they had quite forgotten all about the bread in the oven, and they could not help it, for she had quite bewitched them.

The Viking became interested at this, and asked who the girl might be. They answered that she was the

daughter of Aké and Grima, the bondsmen who lived in the hut, though they could scarcely believe it, for they were such an aged and repugnant-looking couple, and the old woman such a vicious old harridan; and yet they said she was their daughter Kraka, their only child, who tended the goats on the mountain slopes. But her beauty, they persisted, was fairly bewitching, and her bearing that of a queen. "Impossible!" the Viking answered, "I cannot believe it. You have all seen my lamented consort, the incomparable Thora, and any one who ever saw her ought not to speak of other women's loveliness." Yet the men maintained that the girl's rare beauty would in every respect vie with that of their dead queen. Then the chief ordered that Kraka should immediately be brought before him, and promised that if he really found her so exceedingly lovely as the men had given out, he would forgive them their negligence.

Kraka was soon brought, and Ragnar Lodbrook was even more bewitched than his men by her incomparable beauty, and was quite spellbound by the prudent and ready answers she gave to all his questions. The Viking thought her a fair prize, and took her aboard his own galley, and told her she should never return to the old people at the hut. Her radiant beauty at first repelled every advance from the wild and passionate hero of many lands, for she was virtuous as she was wise and beautiful; and this pleased her captor much, and he could not help admiring that lofty spirit which dared even him, the hero of his time. Ragnar was famed for always being kind and considerate to women, a virtue which in later times might

have been called chivalrous; and though she concealed even from him her royal descent, he made her his lawful wife and queen.

Ragnar already possessed two sons, Eric and Agnar, by his former consort, and they found in Kraka a loving stepmother; indeed the young queen, through her many virtues and rare wisdom, endeared herself not only to her newly-found family, but to all the people over whom Ragnar Lodbrook ruled. Many years of happy married life followed, during which she presented her royal husband with five sons, all of whom became more or less famous in the warfares of the times.

When King Ragnar, already advanced in years, was on a visit to King Eisten Bele, one of the Swedish petty kings, he saw this chief's daughter Ingeborg, whose beauty quite captivated the gallant champion. "The Princess" went the round of the table at the banquet given in his honour, and filled the goblets of the royal guest. Her beauty, and the wine, must have intoxicated him, for he determined upon separating himself from Kraka, whom he but knew as a bondsman's daughter, and thus unworthy to share his throne, and then marry Ingeborg, the daughter of a king, as more befitting his royal state. Eisten Bele readily consented to this union, to be contracted as soon as Ragnar had rid himself of Kraka. When the ice broke up Ragnar sailed away, promising to return during the summer to celebrate the nuptials with the fair Ingeborg.

Upon his return home he divulged nothing to Kraka of his design, but the news came to her through other

channels at the court. Instead of upbraiding her spouse, she resorted to other means far wiser; she increased her loving attention to him, and was more charming than ever; and she told the king that at last she thought the right time had come to tell him who were her real parents, and that she was no vile bondsman's child. With unfeigned amazement he learnt that she was the daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild; he listened eagerly to the recital of her wondrous flight in the harp, effected by King Heimer, and to her tale of woe during her long captivity with Aké and Grima. His joy to possess a queen of noble descent and equal to himself was sincere; he thought he had never loved her so well before, and dispelled all thoughts of parting with her. The image of Ingeborg vanished from his heart for ever, and no journey to Eisten Bele was taken to celebrate the contemplated union, which this warrior thought a great insult to him, as his daughter was a princess, and he the King of Upsala. But Eisten Bele got no opportunity to avenge this breach of promise, for Queen Aslog, the name she now resumed, persuaded her two stepsons to hasten to Upsala to war with its king in his own domains. This they did, but Agnar fell in the battle, which grieved his noble and grateful stepmother as if he had been her own son.

When Ragnar Lodbrook, on one of his seafaring expeditions, fell into the hands of King Ella of Northumbria, and by his victor was thrown into a pit filled with serpents, and there met his tragic death, which event is recorded in the English Chronicles, Aslog sent all her own five sons to avenge his death. She survived her spouse

many years, a disconsolate widow, honouring the memory of the noble Viking who had rescued her from ignoble thraldom and made her queen of his heart and realm,—Aslog, the little child princess, who had lain in a harp, and sobbed in harmony with its tremulous strings to the piteous lay recording the fate of her hapless parents.

FRITHIOF THE BOLD, AND FAIR INGEBORG.

During King Bele's rule his land was one of the most prosperous and fertile of Norway. He was celebrated for his noble deeds, and for his many famous campaigns in distant lands. His faithful friend and companion in all his expeditions was Torsten Wikingson. Naturally the country flourished under the protection of two such noble men, and no enemy ever dared invade their territory. At the time that our story begins they were both old men, but whenever they sat in the Assembly of the Nobles they had always good advice to give, and when they told of the wonders of foreign lands, and of their adventures in former years, the guests listened in such breathless silence that they forgot to empty their goblets.

The palace of the king, in which was a hall spacious enough to entertain two thousand people, was situated on a hill. In the valley beneath flowed a brook, beside which the two friends would often take their walks, sometimes also ascending a little eminence, which projected into the sea, from which they had a lovely view of the surrounding country.

One day when they had mounted this little hill, they threw themselves down on the green turf to rest, and their conversation turned to bygone days, and to their approach-

ing departure from this world. By-and-bye they sent for their three sons, who presently joined them. First came Helge, Bele's eldest son, whose expression was dark and sinister, for he was in the habit of spending most of his time in the temple, where the priests initiated him in the mysteries of the oracle. Next came Halfdan, a laughing merry boy, and between these two, and a head taller than either of them, was Frithiof, Torsten's son, who had a manly countenance, and seemed to be conscious of his superior strength.

"My sons," said the king, as they approached, "you stand on holy ground, for your fathers, being old men, are weary of their long labours, and now intend quitting this world." He then proceeded to give them his parting advice, and to explain to them his last wishes, exhorting them to live together in love and unity, and to devote themselves to the good government of the country that he left to their charge. "To thee, Helge," he continued, turning towards his eldest son, "I leave the special care of thy sister Ingeborg. Be a father to her, but on no account force her to do anything against her will, and above all in her choice of a husband she is to be perfectly free."

After they had said all they wished, Bele and Torsten dismissed their sons with their blessings, directing them, as a parting request, to raise on the spot where they were then resting a monument, with an inscription which should make known to all who visited the place that they had been faithful to one another till death, and that they had ever protected the rights of their people.

As soon as the funeral was over, and the monument erected over the ashes of the departed heroes, Frithiof returned to Framnäs, his father's estate. Here he found many costly heirlooms, amongst others, a magnificent bracelet, the clasp of which was formed of a sparkling ruby, and which was so wonderfully made that it would exactly fit any arm. Besides this he found a sword called Angurwadel, which had a golden hilt, and a blade with a peculiar sparkle, and also a beautiful ship, *Ellide,* which had been a present from the mighty sea-god Æsir, on the occasion of his being entertained by Wiking, an ancestor of Torsten's.

Twelve warriors were equipped, ready to fight for and to defend Frithiof in case of war, and indeed there was nothing wanting in the mansion which human heart could possibly desire. Nevertheless Frithiof felt lonely and unhappy, for he missed the one being who was dearer to him than all else in the world. But he knew where to find his beloved, for she was no other than fair Ingeborg, King Bele's daughter, and Helge's sister. He had been brought up with her, and therefore knew well how to value her pure and loving heart, which he could not but know had, since childhood, belonged to him. He determined therefore to seek her, and ask her if she would share with him his life and his fortunes.

FRITHIOF AND INGEBORG.

Early the next morning Frithiof set out for Helge's palace. On arriving he entered the great hall, the walls of which were adorned with tapestry and arms, and in the

centre of which grew an oak-tree so tall that the top had grown through an opening in the apartment, and its foliage spread over the glass roof. At first sight he thought the hall was empty, but presently he perceived fair Ingeborg, seated at the foot of the oak, engaged in embroidering a sky-blue mantle, with a gold border. She did not hear him as he softly approached, and stood looking over her shoulder examining her work. He saw that she was embroidering on the mantle a figure of Balder, but what was his delight when he recognised in the young and beautiful god a likeness of himself! A cry of joy escaped his lips; Ingeborg started, turned hastily round, and sank into her lover's arms. For a happy hour they sat together talking over the days of their childhood; until at length Frithiof spoke of the object of his visit to his beloved, and of his hopes for the future. "But," said she hesitating, as she sat with her trembling hand clasped in his, "thinkest thou that my brother Helge, who now stands in my father's place to me, will give his consent?" "Children," interrupted Hilding, the instructor of Torsten and Ingeborg in their childhood, who had entered the apartment unperceived, "build not your hopes on Helge. He is proud of being a descendant of Odin, and will not willingly give his sister in marriage to the son of a peasant." "Then will I demand her hand from the community." cried Frithiof, "which surely ranks above the son of Odin."

Accordingly the young hero hastened to Framnäs, and embarking in his ship *Ellide,* made his way to the hill which contained the ashes of Torsten and Bele. Here

he found the kings administering justice, and immediately laid his request before them, adding that Ingeborg favoured his suit, and that King Bele would probably have sanctioned it, as he had allowed them to be brought up together. In ending his speech, he promised to be the faithful friend and protector of the land.

"Thou holdest thy head high," replied Helge, "but the daughter of Odin is not for the son of a peasant. She is destined to marry none but an equal; and as for my country, I am able myself to protect it." "A peasant girl," said Halfdan, "is more fitted to sweep thy palace than the daughter of Odin." "Or, if thou art in want of employment," continued Helge, sarcastically, "become my servant. Thou canst have a place amongst my menials." "I am a free man," cried Frithiof proudly, "and from the community will I demand the hand of fair Ingeborg. But in the meantime, come not thou too near my sword," and with these words he drew Angurwadel from its sheath, and with a mighty stroke cleft the king's golden shield, which hung on a tree hard by.

KING SIGURD RING'S COURTSHIP.

In the royal palace at Upsala, enthroned beneath a canopy of gold, and surrounded by five hundred warriors, sat the aged monarch, Sigurd Ring. Graceful maidens waited on the king and the courtiers, and filled their goblets with sparkling wine; but no sounds of merriment were to be heard in the palace; all was hushed and sad, and the king himself sat stern and silent on the throne. He was thinking of his departed queen, who had died

many years before, leaving him and his orphaned children lonely and forsaken in the great palace, which looked deserted now it was no longer graced by her royal presence. As the king sat sadly thinking of the happy bygone days, one of the youthful courtiers, seizing a harp, sang, in clear and manly tones, a song to the memory of the departed queen, whom the angel of death had so soon called away from the side of her devoted spouse. From this song he drifted on into another, in which he sang the praises of a beautiful and pure maiden, who dwelt in Hilding's mansion, and who might be tempted to regard with favour the mighty monarch of the North, and to bring joy and contentment into his palace once more, by coming to grace it with her fair presence. As the song ended, it was loudly applauded on all sides, for many of the courtiers present had formerly been Hilding's companions-in-arms, and having seen fair Ingeborg in his house, had learnt to appreciate her noble character and high intellect, and deemed her worthy to share the throne of their beloved ruler, and to be a second mother to his orphan children. The king listened with favour to their advice, and thought it would be well to follow it. "For," said he, "though she be still young, if she should choose me of her own free will, and be a kind mother to my orphan children, I will vow to love and honour her as I did the departed queen."

Accordingly he despatched messengers, laden with costly gifts, to Helge's court, to persuade him to give him his sister Ingeborg in marriage. Helge, after having sumptuously entertained the messengers, offered sacrifices

in Balder's temple, in order to ascertain whether or no the god favoured Sigurd Ring's proposal. He declared that the signs were unfavourable, and that, therefore, he could not give his sister in marriage to the king. Halfdan, sneering at Sigurd Ring's advanced age, declared that it was a pity he had not come to court his bride himself, for in that case he would with his own hands have helped him to mount his steed. The messengers, infuriated by Helge's refusal and Halfdan's ridicule, returned to their country, and told the king what had occurred, which so incensed the aged monarch that he immediately declared war against Helge, exclaiming that he would soon prove that he had strength enough left to chastise two impertinent boys.

FRITHIOF'S DEPARTURE.

Late at night fair Ingeborg sat in Balder's temple, where she had been placed by her brother Helge, to protect her in case of danger during the ensuing war with Sigurd Ring. Frithiof had promised to visit her there, and though she anxiously awaited his arrival, she yet feared the anger of Balder, whose temple, at that hour, it was sacrilege for any layman to enter. Weary of watching, she at length stepped out into the starlit night, and advanced as far as the golden chain which marked the boundary of the sacred grove. Presently she heard footsteps, and the next moment her lover had sprung lightly over the barrier which separated them, and stood beside her.

"Oh! think of Balder," exclaimed she in terrified accents, "the holy god, whose temple thou pollutest!"

"Balder is a gentle, loving god," replied Frithiof, "and will not chide us for our love. To-morrow, dearest Ingeborg, I shall demand thy hand of the community, which assembles on Bele's Hill. In return, I will promise the services of my good sword in the war against Sigurd Ring; and I will fight for our cause, for our love is chaste and pure as the stars above us, and as the god of Virtue and Innocence on whose ground we stand."

The next day the assembly met together on Bele's Hill to make preparations for the approaching war. "Where is Frithiof?" was demanded on all sides. "If he fights for us, Val-father is sure to give us the victory." As they spoke, Frithiof, the picture of youth, beauty, and strength, approached, and stepping into their midst, made known to them his request.

"The hero Frithiof, the protector and friend of our country, is worthy of the daughter of Odin," such was the unanimous decision of the assembly.

"I accept the verdict," said Helge, "but Ingeborg shall never be given to one who has broken through the holy boundary of Balder's territory, to deceive a foolish maid with protestations of love. Frithiof, thou didst converse last night with Ingeborg in Balder's grove—deny it if thou darest!"

"Deny it!" cried a thousand voices simultaneously, "deny it, and Odin's daughter shall be thine!" But if his life had depended on his answer Frithiof could not have told a lie. He answered in a firm, clear voice: "I did hold converse with her in the grove of the Temple—surely that is no outrage on the god of Love?" He

could say no more, his voice was drowned by the clashing of shields and swords.

"Woe, woe to the polluter of the holy Temple!" was the cry on all sides, and the warriors shrank from him as from a pestilence.

"Banishment or death to the desecrator of the Temple," said the king, "such is the law of our country. But nevertheless I will be merciful to the man who calls himself the protector of the land. Let him go to Angantyr, the king of the Isles, and demand from him the tribute-money which has not been paid since my father's death. And if he should return unsuccessful, let him be deprived of honour and banished from the land. What say you, my friends, do you approve of my decision?" His words were instantly followed by a clash of arms, which signified the assent of the community, and Frithiof, on hearing it, strode haughtily from the assembly, his countenance darkened by the passion which glowed in his breast.

Once more fair Ingeborg sat in Balder's temple at night, and awaited the coming of her lover. As soon as she heard the sound of his footsteps she went out into the grove to meet him, and he, springing over the golden chain as before, joined her where she stood. He then told her all that had occurred, and ended by assuring her that he would soon succeed in obtaining the tribute-money from Angantyr, either by persuasion or by his sword.

"When I have done so I will send the money to Helge," said he, "for then will the people who disown me now, acknowledge that I have redeemed my honour. But thou, dearest Ingeborg, must follow me to Angantyr's Island.

My ship *Ellide,* which lies ready on the shore close by, will take us first there, and then further towards the south, to a beautiful land where perpetual summer reigns, and where the trees bear golden fruit. In this country there lived formerly a free and noble people, but they have gradually sunk into bondage. It shall be our endeavour to win back for them their freedom, so that they shall flourish once more, and then will we live together peacefully in this happy land."

"Sweet hope indeed," replied Ingeborg, in tears, "but I cannot go with thee."

"Thou canst not! and who shall prevent thee?" cried Frithiof.

"It is my honour that prevents me," said Ingeborg, "thy honour and mine. Were I to accompany thee, the world would blame me, and look down upon me, and then wouldst thou too cease to love and honour me."

Long did Frithiof try to win her over, but in vain; the virtuous maiden was not to be moved from her resolution. At length Frithiof, overcome with grief and passion—

"Persist in thy heartless resolve," cried he. "I leave thee to pursue my lonely wanderings, and soon I trust to find, in the grave, the peace I have in vain sought on earth." He turned to go without even bidding her adieu, but she laid her soft hand upon his arm, and held him back.

"Frithiof," said she, "wilt thou rob me of the knowledge of thy love, the only comfort that remains to me in my lonely hours? Sometimes, when for days I have wept and mourned thine absence, I look up at the sky at night,

and in the stars I think I see thy beloved image, and hold thy hand in mine, and dream that I shall hold it so for ever."

"Ingeborg!" cried Frithiof, "thou dost not dream! The gods have sent thee a vision of the future. Listen! I shall sail straightaway for Angantyr's Isle, and return with the tribute money, before Sigurd Ring has had time to invade the land. He will not be able to withstand my sword; I shall conquer him, and then will the people no longer refuse to give thee in marriage to the deliverer of their country." Saying this, Frithiof clasped round her arm, as a token of their plighted troth, the golden bracelet with the precious ruby, which had been left him as an heirloom by his father, and after holding her once more to his heart, he left her, and made his way to the shore, where lay *Ellide*, his ship, in the charge of his faithful friends, who were ready to accompany him to Angantyr's Island.

THE VOYAGE.

The rising sun saw Frithiof's ship dancing merrily on the waves, and rapidly making her way towards Angantyr's Isle. The voyage lasted several weeks, during which time they encountered more than one heavy storm; but thanks to Frithiof's courage and experience at sea, they at length arrived safely at their destination.

Angantyr made the strangers welcome, and entertained them at his court, with all possible hospitality; but when Frithiof informed him of the object of his visit, he replied: "I have never paid tribute to any land, nor will

I do so now, and whoever demands it of me must obtain it by the sword. But out of gratitude for the help which Torsten and Bele rendered me when I needed it, it has been my wont to send them yearly a gift from my treasury. Thou, Frithiof, being their heir, art entitled to a like gift." With these words he handed to Frithiof a purse filled with gold.

Frithiof, satisfied with having accomplished the object of his visit to Angantyr, was now all impatience to set sail for his own country; but he was unwillingly compelled to delay his departure, as his vessel needed repairing after the heavy storms she had endured; and then the autumn winds setting in, drove great icebergs from the North into the vicinity of the Islands, and rendered their departure an impossibility. During the winter, therefore, they were forced to remain the guests of Angantyr. Frithiof alone was dissatisfied at this arrangement; his heart was ever in Balder's grove, which contained all that was dear to him in the world, and he could not dispel the dark presentiments that clouded his soul when he thought of how long he had been parted from his beloved.

Spring returned at last, with its blue sky and its budding trees and flowers. There was no longer any obstacle to prevent the departure of Frithiof and his friends, and they accordingly set sail at once to return to their own country. After a prosperous voyage of some weeks, they at length came in sight of land, and by-and-bye they could distinguish Balder's temple as it rose against the sky

Frithiof, who stood at the helm, strained his eyes to catch the first glimpse of his beloved home. As they approached still nearer to the land, he could see the hills and valleys, the woods, and even the silvery brooks of his native land. But suddenly he beheld a sight that filled him with dismay, for on the spot where formerly had stood the noble castle of his ancestors nothing was now to be seen but a heap of black and smouldering ruins! The shore was quite deserted; none of his faithful subjects were there, as in former days, to welcome him home.

Presently the vessel reached the strand, and Frithiof disembarked. As he did so, a solitary bird came fluttering round him, which he instantly recognised as his favourite falcon. It flapped its wings impatiently, as if it would reveal some secret, but Frithiof could not understand its signs. As he stood awestruck and wondering with the bird on his hand, he saw old Hilding, the friend of his childhood, approaching. He hailed him with delight, and implored him to tell him at once all that had occurred during his absence.

"It is a sad tale to tell," said Hilding. "Soon after thy departure, King Sigurd Ring invaded the land; a bloody battle ensued, in which Helge was beaten. As soon as he saw that the battle was lost he took to flight, but in doing so he threw a burning torch into the hall of thy castle, cursing its owner, who was not there to protect it against the enemy. The conqueror then offered to make peace, on one condition, namely, that fair Ingeborg should be given him in marriage. But she, true to her absent lover, refused to consent to this. Then the nobles of the

land did their best to persuade her to accede to the King's demands, representing to her that on her depended the weal or woe of the land, until at last, after a fearful struggle with herself, she consented to become a martyr for her country's sake."

Frithiof, on hearing these fatal words, turned first deadly pale, and then crimson with anger.

"Woe, woe to the man," cried he bitterly, "who ever again believes in the promises of a woman!"

"Calm thyself, Frithiof," said Hilding; "endure that which the gods, and not man, have ordained."

"I cannot endure it calmly," cried he. "Come, to-day is Midsummer Day, and the priest will be offering sacrifices in Balder's temple. Thither we will go, and I will show them how well I can aid them in their sacred duties!"

THE WOLF IN THE TEMPLE.

It was evening, and the priests were assembled in Balder's temple to offer sacrifices to the god. In their midst, and assisting them in the slaughter of the victims, stood Helge. Suddenly a clash of arms was heard in the outer court, succeeded by the sound of Frithiof's voice. The next minute Frithiof himself entered the temple, and striding up to where the king stood, he flung a purse full of gold into his face, crying: "Here is the ransom, by which I redeem my honour. But I have yet to avenge the destruction of Framnäs, and above all to recover the bracelet, which thou hast stolen from fair Ingeborg to adorn the image of Balder."

Hardly had the words escaped his lips when he caught sight of the bracelet on the arm of the god, and hastening to the spot, he tried in vain to loosen it from the arm, on which it seemed to have grown. At length, by using all his strength, he succeeded in wrenching it away, but in doing so the violence of the sudden shock loosened the image from its stand, and it fell with a crash on to the pile where the priests were offering the sacrifices. In an instant there was a tremendous blaze; the flames rose so high that they set fire to the rafters and to the tapestry on the walls, and before long the whole temple was on fire. A fearful tumult arose; the people rushed hither and thither, bringing water, and tearing down the burning tapestry and woodwork. But their efforts were all in vain; the flames spread every moment, making the sky blood-red for miles around. Frithiof, who had never in his life submitted to any man, found himself obliged to submit to the gods. In great distress of mind he wandered away from the sad scene, where human aid was no longer of any avail, and as he passed through the people they fled from him, crying out: "There goes the desecrator of the Temple! the wolf in the Holy Place (*Warg i wêum*)!"

KING SIGURD RING'S COURT.

Frithiof was now an exile, feared, hated, and shunned by everybody, with nothing left to him but his ship *Ellide,* and the faithful friends who had accompanied him on his voyage to Angantyr's Isle. In this ship he now traversed the seas far and wide, engaging in many battles, and

gathering around him many brave warriors, who accompanied him in their own ships on his bold enterprises. Victory attended him everywhere, and kings and princes paid him tribute, for the terror of his name had spread far and wide.

Nevertheless he found neither rest nor peace for his soul, for the curse of the offended deity, whose temple he had destroyed, seemed ever to be upon him; neither could he tear from his heart the memory of her who had been so cruelly stolen from him, for in the clouds he seemed constantly to see her fair image, and in the rushing of the waters to hear her gentle voice. He believed that if he could but see her once again, and hold her hand in his, he should be at peace once more.

Impressed with this idea, he set out for King Sigurd Ring's Court, knowing that that was the only place where he had a chance of seeing her. Not wishing, however, to be recognised as Ingeborg's lover, he wrapped himself in a bearskin, and procured a staff to lean upon, that he might be taken for an old man, and in this disguise he entered the palace of the king. Here he found many guests assembled, who were drinking, and making merry, so that at first his entrance remained unnoticed. But no sooner had the courtiers caught sight of the stranger who stood in the doorway than they began to ridicule him and point at him. One of them even ventured to pluck at his bearskin, upon which he seized the offender in his strong arms, and turning him upside down, stood him on his head. Having thus displayed his strength, no one dared again to molest him. The king,

however, who had heard the disturbance, cried out to know what the noise was about, and on being informed, commanded the stranger to come forward, and state his business. Frithiof, stepping before the throne, forthwith told the king how, after weathering many storms, his ship had at last been wrecked on Sigurd Ring's coast, and that having heard that the king was celebrated for his hospitality to strangers, he had ventured to seek shelter at his court. "Instead of hospitality, however," he concluded, "I have received nothing at thy court but contempt and ridicule, for which I have not hesitated to chastise the principal offender."

"Well said," replied the king; "but now I pray thee drop thy disguise, for I know thee to be other than thou seemest."

At these words Frithiof let the bearskin fall from off his shoulders, and great was the astonishment of all present to behold, instead of an aged cripple, a tall and powerful man, in the prime of life, dressed in a costly suit of sky-blue and gold, with a silver girdle round his waist. The king begged him to be seated, and requested the queen to present him with a goblet of wine. Ingeborg, blushing, approached the guest, and as she handed him the goblet she trembled so that some of the wine was spilt on her fair hand.

"I drink to the queen," cried Frithiof joyfully, as he raised the goblet to his lips, for he knew now that Ingeborg not only recognised him, but that she loved him still.

During the whole of the ensuing winter, Frithiof re-

however, who had heard the disturbance, cried out to know what the noise was about, and on being informed, commanded the stranger to come forward, and state his business. Frithiof, stepping before the throne, forthwith told the king how, after weathering many storms, his ship had at last been wrecked on Sigurd Ring's coast, and that having heard that the king was celebrated for his hospitality to strangers, he had ventured to seek shelter at his court. "Instead of hospitality, however," he concluded, "I have received nothing at thy court but contempt and ridicule, for which I have not hesitated to chastise the principal offender."

FRITHIOF AT THE COURT OF KING RING.

(After the painting by Ferd Leeke.)

"Well said," replied the king, "but now I pray thee drop thy surgeon, for I know thee to be other than thou seemest."

KING RING replied, "Thy speech is plain, and plain thy speech should be;
For Norman kings well love to hear the words that fall so free.
Queen! take the biggest beaker up, and fill it with the best
And bid him drain it for our sake, and bid him be our guest."

—From Tegner's Frithiof.

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During the whole of the ensuing winter, Frithiof re-

mained the guest of King Sigurd Ring, who soon learnt to love the stranger, and to find in him a faithful friend and companion.

One day, as they were driving on the ice in a sledge, the ice suddenly gave way, and Frithiof, by dint of his great strength and presence of mind, succeeded in dragging the sledge out of the water, thereby saving the king's life, while the other courtiers had kept away as far as possible from the scene of danger. When spring came round again, he frequently accompanied the king when he went hunting, but the aged monarch sometimes felt fatigued before the end of the hunt, and would stop to rest. On one of these occasions, he wished to stay behind alone with Frithiof, who in vain represented to him the danger of remaining unattended in the wood. The king would not be convinced, and anon he fell asleep, with his head resting in Frithiof's lap. Presently two birds, one black and the other white, came flying down from the trees above. The black bird fluttered close to Frithiof, and whispered in his ear: "Now is thy time, if thou hopest ever to call the queen thine own. The king is in thy power, thou hast but to thrust thy sword into his heart, and in this lonely wood no one will be the wiser." But the white bird's song was in a very different strain. "The eyes of the gods," it sang, "penetrate even into the darkest woods. They would know of the evil deed, and would find means of punishing the perpetrator."

"But think," continued the black bird, "think of the beauty of the queen. Courage, be not a coward; one stroke of thy sword, and she is thine for ever." And

Frithiof did draw his sword; for one instant he held it aloft, then with all his strength he flung it from him, so that it fell down a precipice close by. No sooner had he done so than the black bird screamed and disappeared, but the white one spread its wings and flew straight up to Heaven.

The king awakened by the clatter of the sword as it fell, raised his head, and turning to Frithiof, exclaimed: "This sleep has indeed been blessed to me, for it has taught me to appreciate the true worth of the man whom I received in my palace as a stranger, and have since entertained as my guest. I confess now that I recognised thee, Frithiof, from the first, for I had heard so much of the hero who, exiled from his native land for setting fire to Balder's temple, was feared by every one on land and sea. I expected thee to come with an army to rob me of my kingdom and my wife; instead of which thou camest in a beggar's garb,—perhaps, thought I, intent on a foul murder. I wished to prove thee, Frithiof, therefore I rested just now on thy knee. Thou hast nobly stood the test, and art indeed a hero, for not only hast thou conquered brave warriors on the field of battle, but above all thou hast conquered that subtle enemy who whispers his poisoned words into the ears of men, and tempts them to evil deeds. Therefore I am now prepared to bequeath to thee my kingdom and my wife, for thou art worthy of them! Befriend my young son, and make of him a hero such as thou art. As for me, it is time I quitted the world, but I will die a death worthy of a warrior—I will betake myself to my vessel, and there await my fate."

"I thank thee, my king," replied Frithiof; "but it is thy son, and not I who shall succeed to thy throne. I am an unhappy exile, pursued by the vengeance of the gods, and a peaceful life is denied me. A warlike life must be mine; I am destined to battle against wind and wave, and to fight against the anger of the god whom I have offended. Adieu, my king! greet fair Ingeborg from me, and bid her walk no more upon the shore, for fear the waves should wash my corpse to her feet." So speaking, the unhappy man strode away into the wood, no one knew whither.

Shortly after this, the king Sigurd Ring called together the free nobles of his land, and telling them that he felt it was time for him to depart from this world, bade them choose for themselves a new king. Beside him stood his young son, Ragnar Lodbrook, the child of his first wife, who, though only fifteen years of age, was a strong brave youth, bearing a marked resemblance to his father. The nobles were unanimous in choosing him for their king, and lifting him upon the royal shield they carried him about in triumph. The aged monarch now took a tender farewell of his people and of his young son, exhorting them to maintain peace, and to devote their lives to the good of their native land. He then embarked in his vessel, which had previously been filled with tow steeped in oil, and as the fresh breeze which sprang up drove it out into the open sea, he took a burning torch and flung it into the hold of the vessel. In a few minutes the whole ship was on fire, and those on shore could see the mighty flames rise higher and higher, and

reflect themselves against the sky; till, as the burning vessel drifted away, the red light of the flames grew fainter, and at last disappeared below the horizon.

FRITHIOF'S ATONEMENT.

It was evening, and Frithiof stood alone on Torsten's Hill watching the sun, as it sank to rest in the western sky. As he stood thus the happy days of his childhood rose upon his memory, the days which he had spent in fair Ingeborg's company, when they had wandered together in the fields and valleys, plucking the wild flowers, and carving their names on the bark of the trees. But suddenly this fair picture was darkened by the memory of the two brothers, who had been the destroyers of his peace and happiness, and the authors of the crimes he had committed.

"Vengeance!' whispered a small voice within him.

"Yes, vengeance!" cried he aloud. "Vengeance on those who have blighted the fair prospect of my life! When that is accomplished then I too will die, and my blood shall atone to the gods for my crimes. Oh, hear me, father Torsten," cried he,—"give thy son some sign by which he may know that he is heard."

The waves continued to break upon the shore, and the gentle wind to sigh in the valley; and the stars came out one by one; but no sound or sign was sent to comfort him. Presently he turned his eyes upon the hill where Balder's temple had formerly stood, and looking up towards heaven, he perceived a faint light in the sky, which, as he gazed, grew stronger and brighter, and in the

midst of it appeared a vision, which he instantly recognised as the image of Balder's temple.

Overcome with wonder and joy, he sank upon his knees, and covered his face with his hands. He understood the vision which his father had sent him; neither death nor blood was demanded of him as the expiation of his crime; but a new temple in place of the old one was the atonement which the god required.

Frithiof therefore lost no time in seeing the great work commenced. A thousand hands were employed in the construction of the building, celebrated architects were sent for from the south, and in a wonderfully short space of time a new and beautiful temple stood upon the site of the old one, overlooking the green valley and the mighty ocean.

The day of consecration arrived. Within the temple stood Frithiof, gazing up in contentment at the image of Balder, who was seated on a throne, in a recess of sky-blue and gold.

Presently the priests entered, burning incense, and they were followed by twelve men, bearing harps, who walked round and round the altar, singing praises to the god. These again were followed by twelve virgins, who took up the song of praise, filling the temple with their melodious voices. A holy calm stole over Frithiof's soul, for he knew now that he was at last reconciled to the god. But suddenly a shadow came between him and the light; he looked up, and beheld the king, clothed in the royal robe of purple.

In an instant all his peace of mind had vanished; bit-

ter hatred filled his heart, and his hand involuntarily sought the hilt of his sword. But he thrust the blade back into its sheath, murmuring: "Not here in the holy temple—in a more suitable spot will I revenge myself." "Not here," repeated a voice in his ear.

He turned, and saw the high priest standing beside him, who continued: "Dost thou suppose that the god will remain ignorant of thy deed of vengeance, though it be not wreaked within the walls of his temple? Dost thou think to reconcile thyself to Balder by this building of stone? He demands a far different temple of thee, a temple of peace and goodwill in thine heart, and if thou hast it not, thou art still far from being reconciled to him. Know that Helge is no more; he fell in battle against the Finns; but Halfdan approaches, tendering thee his hand in friendship."

"Alas! it is too late," replied Frithiof; "the curse of the god is still upon me. I know it by the wild hatred which fills my heart whenever my enemy is near me."

"Say not so, my son," answered the priest; "knowest thou not that Balder, the god of peace and love, will gladly give thee the strength to forgive thine enemy, if thou dost but ask him for it? See," he continued, pointing to Balder's throne, "he beckons thee to him, he would be reconciled to thee."

As the old man spoke, Frithiof lifted his eyes toward the throne, and as he gazed on the image of the god, the spirit of love and peace seemed to enter into his heart. At this moment he saw Halfdan, who had noiselessly approached, standing beside him, anxiously waiting to

know whether he would consent to be reconciled. Frithiof hesitated no longer, but flinging away his sword, frankly tendered his hand to his enemy.

No sooner had he done so than sounds of melodious music were heard; the door at the end of the aisle opened, and Ingeborg, radiant and lovely as ever, robed in a wedding-garment, entered the temple, and advanced to her brother's side. In her hand she held a wreath of roses, which, still wet with the pearly drops of the morning dew, looked as if they had been watered by tears of joy.

Frithiof was overcome with happiness at the sight of his beloved Ingeborg, and as he approached her, she stepped forward to meet him, and wrapping her soft arms about him, leant her head upon his breast.

So the days of sorrow and battle were over at last for Frithiof, and now he might look forward to peace and contentment in the future, for fair Ingeborg and he were at length one, never more to be parted.

RAGNAR LODBROOK.

RAGNAR was the son of King Sigurd Ring, and his first wife Alfhild. His father, when an old man, had fallen deeply in love with Alfsol, the daughter of King Alf of Jutland. Her brothers refused to give her in marriage to so old a man, and when they were defeated in battle by Sigurd Ring, they poisoned her rather than she should become his wife. The king thereupon had her corpse carried on board his ship, which he steered out into the open sea, and then plunged his sword into his heart, thus dying beside the body of his beloved Alfsol.

Ragnar, therefore, although only fifteen years of age, was now king. He was remarkable as well for his great beauty as for the dauntless courage which he always displayed when he went with his followers on marauding expeditions to foreign lands.

On one of these expeditions he landed on the coast of Norway, and penetrated alone into the heart of the land. On gaining the summit of a hill, he threw himself on the soft turf to rest, and to enjoy the beautiful landscape which spread itself out before his view; the green valley at his feet, the lake, sparkling like diamonds in the sunshine, and the verdant meadows and cornfields. As he gazed on this fair picture, his mind was filled with the

idea that the wild and warlike life he had hitherto led was after all far less satisfactory than a life of peaceful, quiet happiness.

As he thus pondered he suddenly became aware that two hostile divisions of soldiers had entered the valley; presently their trumpets sounded, and they rode at one another full tilt, with their shields raised. His surprise was great to perceive that one of the divisions was led by a beautiful woman, who was mounted on a milk-white charger, and dressed in silver armour; while her lovely raven locks, escaping from under her helmet, fell in rich profusion over her neck and shoulders. She rode before her soldiers, cheering them on, and fighting the enemy herself with sword and spear. Many fell beneath her strokes, but the enemy being too strong for her little band to resist, they were obliged to retreat. Not so the heroic maiden; captivity or death threatened to be her doom, yet still she fought on with indomitable courage, her bright silver armour making her conspicuous wherever the battle was hottest.

Ragnar, seeing that she stood in sore need of help, could no longer remain an inactive spectator of the scene, but, seizing his sword, he hastened to her side, and fought desperately against the enemy. His sword made such havoc amongst the foe, and such numbers of their best warriors were slain that at length those who were left were obliged to seek safety in flight.

As soon as the battle was over, Ragnar straightway withdrew to his ship. There he learnt that the name of the soldier-maid was Lodgerda, that she ruled the sur-

rounding country, and dwelt in a beautiful palace in the midst of her possessions.

The following day he repaired thither, and was received by Lodgerda with much joy and gratitude as her friend and deliverer. Ragnar remained a guest at the palace for three days, after which time, as he loved Lodgerda dearly, he besought her to become his wife, to which she joyfully consented.

Ragnar and Lodgerda lived very happily together for some time. She was an excellent wife to him, but she refused to leave her own country for his, nor would she resign to him her rights as sovereign. Ragnar passed three peaceful years at her side, but at last the war-like spirit woke again within him, and when he heard that the Danish Islands had rebelled against his rule, and become independent, he parted from his wife, who could not bring herself to leave her peaceful home for a strange country, and set out for his own kingdom alone.

In a very little while he succeeded in putting down the rebels, and proceeded to his palace at Hledra, covered with glory.

One day a stranger at his court showed him, in a magic mirror, a virgin of wonderful beauty. The king was so enchanted at the sight of her that he could hardly take his eyes from her face, and declared that the man who could call such a treasure his own must be the happiest being on earth.

"Yes, indeed," replied the stranger, "thou sayest truly, for this noble maid is not only famous for her beauty, but also for her wisdom and goodness. Her father, Her-

rod of East Gothland, asks her advice on all occasions, and if he follows it his enterprises are always successful. Now, however, both he and his daughter are in great distress. Some time ago, two of his warriors presented him with a griffin's egg, which was part of the plunder which they had brought home with them from a foreign land. It was hatched at the king's orders by a swan, and a curious little winged serpent came out of it. He gave the little creature to his daughter, who put it in a golden cage, and fed it with her own hands. It grew, however, so quickly that it was soon too large for the cage, and even for the room, and now it surrounds the whole house in which the princess lives. The monster is still submissive to her, but he guards her with a jealous eye, nor will he allow her to leave the house, or receive food from anyone but from the man who daily brings him an ox for his meals. No one dares attempt to touch him, for his eyes are like flaming fire, his breath is deadly poison, and with his tail he can break the strongest oak-tree, as easily as if it were a reed. The king, therefore, in order to rid himself of this curse, has promised the hand of his daughter to whomever shall succeed in slaying the monster."

Before Ragnar had heard the completion of this tale, he had determined to set out on the adventure himself. He lost no time in procuring a garment of thick wool and ox hide, which he steeped in tar, for he knew that through such a garment neither poison nor venom could penetrate.

Accompanied by many warlike companions, he set out for East Gothland, and landed on the coast not far from the king's castle.

Wrapped in his tarred garment, and armed with a mighty spear, he started for the Princess's abode.

There, surrounding the house with his huge body, he beheld the monster, apparently asleep. He attempted several times to stab him, but in vain; his spear could not pierce the scales of the serpent, which were hard and smooth as steel. Presently the monster raised its huge body, and tried to seize Ragnar in its jaws, hissing meanwhile with rage, and spitting its deadly venom at him. But as it thus coiled itself about, Ragnar perceived an exposed spot under its throat, where the scales appeared to be soft, and at this spot he aimed his spear, with all the strength he could muster. For a few moments the creature writhed and turned in agony, so that the house was shaken to its foundation, and then suddenly the great monster sank to the ground—dead.

The Princess, awakened by the noise, stepped to the window, and beheld the victor clothed in his rude garments, but before she had time to look upon him more closely he withdrew himself from her gaze.

Herrod, as soon as he received the news of the event, ordered a proclamation to be made, to the effect that the people should meet together in an assembly, in order to decide to whom the prize should be awarded.

On the appointed day Ragnar took his place in the assembly, clothed in his tarred garments. At the command of the king, two heralds carried about among the men the point of the spear, which had been taken from the serpent's body, in order to discover who among them possessed the shaft to which it fitted. When Ragnar

produced the same, and fitted the point of the spear on to it, the king, taking him to be a poor man, exclaimed in astonishment: "Ha, thou Leather-Garments, and who taught thee that clever thrust? Comest thou from the Biarma Country, that thou hast such an odour of pitch and tar about thee?"

At these words Ragnar dropped his disguise and stood in his royal attire before the assembled people. "Ragnar! Ragnar! it is the king himself!" cried a multitude of voices, and Herrod, stepping down from his throne, embraced him, saying: "Thou shalt in future be called *Lodbrook* (Leather Garments), in remembrance of thy valour, and I will give thee the hand of my daughter in marriage."

The king kept his word, and the Princess Thora joyfully consented to become the wife of her brave deliverer. Nor had she ever any cause to regret her choice, for her husband was so devoted to her that he even gave up his marauding expeditions in order to remain at her side. Their happiness was augmented by the birth of two sons, Eric and Agnar. But fate suffers no perfect happiness to be on earth and ere long Thora died in the arms of her disconsolate lord.

And now peace and happiness fled from the palace, and sorrow and mourning reigned in their stead, for Ragnar was inconsolable for the loss of his wife.

At length one of the noblest of his warriors stepped before him, and represented to him how that he was still young and in the prime of life, and that it was a sin for him to waste his best years in mourning for his departed

queen. His words roused the sleeping ardour of the king, and soon he was once more tossing in his ship on the billowy ocean, where, amidst dangers and divers adventures, he strove to forget his great sorrow.

One day, landing on the coast of Norway, he sent his servants inland, to prepare food and bake bread. After wandering about, they came to a lowly peasant's hut, and on entering, they found within it a cross, hideous old woman, sitting cowering over the fire. They asked her to help them make the bread, but she excused herself on account of her great age. Just then a young peasant girl entered the cottage, and the men, on seeing her, stared at her with open mouths, and could not find words to address her, for they had never before seen so exquisitely lovely a woman.

"Yes, yes, that is my daughter," croaked the old hag. "See, Kraka, these men would make bread, and do not know how."

Without making any reply, the girl set about preparing the dough herself, and when she had put the loaves into the oven, she directed the men to watch them, as she had other work to do. But the men only had eyes for the beautiful girl, who with wonderful adroitness went about the cottage, cleaning and putting everything to rights.

In consequence of their negligence, some of the loaves were burnt, and when they returned on board the ship they were scolded and punished for their carelessness. They declared, however, that the king himself would have been guilty of the same negligence had he endeavoured to watch the bread in the presence of such a beautiful maid.

Their words aroused the curiosity of the king, and he gave orders that this wonderful maiden should be brought before him on board his vessel on the following morning. She was to come unattended, and yet not alone; naked, and yet clothed; fasting, and yet full.

This strange command was given to Kraka, who accordingly appeared before the king the next day, with a fisherman's net wrapped in folds about her, and accompanied by a shepherd's dog. She had taken some of the juice of a leek, so that she was neither fasting nor full. In this way she obeyed the command of the king to the letter.

Ragnar was much impressed by her wisdom, but still more so by her wonderful beauty, her fair silken locks, and blue eyes, in which the light of heaven was reflected.

He straightway offered to make her his queen, but she, having no great faith in the constancy of man, desired him to complete his voyage, and then, if he should still be of the same mind, to return to Norway, and repeat his offer.

The king submitted to the will of the peasant girl and departed. His devotion to her, however, was unchangeable, and immediately on his return from his voyage he fetched her from her peasant home, and took her to his palace at Hledra as his bride, and there celebrated his marriage-feast.

Kraka bore her husband four sons, the eldest of whom, named Iwar, was very handsome, and had strong broad shoulders, but his lower limbs were so weak that he had always to be carried about. The other three sons were

strong healthy youths, who awaited impatiently the time when they, like their half-brothers, Eric and Agnar, should be permitted to go on distant voyages, and return with rich plunder from foreign lands.

Meanwhile the people had begun to murmur and complain that a peasant girl had been set upon the throne; and the courtiers, who were as dissatisfied as the people, repeated these murmurings to the king.

Ragnar, greatly displeased at these complaints, set out for Swithiod, to pay a visit to his friend, King Eistein. He was cordially welcomed at the court, and the daughter of the mighty king waited upon him herself, and filled his goblet with sparkling wine, and sat beside him at the board.

Ragnar was enchanted as well by her beauty as by her conversation, and when the courtiers pointed out to him the advantage of an alliance with the Princess, he allowed himself to be persuaded, and asked for the king's consent to his marriage with his daughter. This the king granted, and it was arranged that as soon as their betrothal had been solemnized Ragnar should return home, and, under some excuse, divorce his peasant-wife.

When he arrived at his palace at Hledra, Kraka came out as usual with a glad and smiling countenance to welcome him home. She seemed not to notice his cold greeting, but did her utmost to provide him with every possible comfort after his journey, and asked if he had brought any news. On his replying surlily that he had none to give, she informed him that she had heard a strange report about his best friend; that he had wished to divorce

his rightful spouse, in order to marry a king's daughter, and that the betrothal had already been solemnized.

"What knave informed thee of that?" cried Ragnar, angrily.

"My chattering magpies," she quietly replied. "Thou knowest them, for they were present at King Eistein's court during thy stay there. Full of anxiety I sent them after thee, and they brought me a faithful report of thy doings. If thou dost indeed intend to carry out thy plan, I will return to the peasant-folk, whom people believe to be my parents. They murdered my foster-father Heimir, and now thou wilt destroy the happiness of my life. But before thou doest anything rash, listen to me, and I will reveal to thee a secret. Know then that my name is not Kraka, but Aslog, for I am the daughter of King Sigurd the Dragon-slayer, who ranks as high over all the kings of the north as the sun ranks above the stars. My mother was Brynhild. When my father was foully and secretly murdered by his brothers-in-law, Gunnar and Hagen, the good Heimir, for fear of the murderers, bore me away in a harp from the unhappy land, and after wandering about for a long time, came to the peasant's hut, in which thou foundest me. The two inhabitants of the hut, thinking the harp contained great treasures, murdered my faithful protector in his sleep by night, but did not dare to make away with the child which they discovered in the place of the gold they had expected to find. Thus I grew up with them in the cottage. They allowed me to keep my mother's wedding-ring, together with her picture, and the letter which she wrote before her death. Here is the

proof of my story," Kraka continued, producing the letter and the ring, "and yet another token has Odin revealed to me; it shall be made manifest when our unborn babe shall behold the light of the world, for in his eye he shall have a mark like a tiny serpent."

As she ceased speaking, she laid aside her royal jewels, and turned to depart, but Ragnar, who stood shame-faced and abashed before the noble woman whose royal descent he now recognised, besought her to stay. She loved him so dearly that she could not withstand his entreaties, but remained with him, and in due time presented him with a little son, who bore on him the prophesied mark of distinction, and was therefore called Sigurd the Serpent-eyed.

Meanwhile Eric and Agnar, the sons of Ragnar's first wife Thora, had made their names famous by their warlike deeds. They had opportunity of displaying their valour in the war which now broke out with King Eistein, who was enraged at Ragnar's rejection of his daughter.

Eric and Agnar landed on the Swedish coast, but they both fell in the battle which ensued, for Eistein's host was too strong for them, and their ranks were thrown into confusion by the enchanted bull, which the king had ordered to be driven amongst them.

When the news of their defeat and death reached Ragnar's court, his third son Iwar forthwith set out to avenge his brothers' untimely end. No sooner was the battle opened, however, than the huge enchanted bull rushed bellowing as before amidst the soldiers, causing terror and confusion in the ranks. Iwar therefore lost no time in

seizing his mighty bow and arrow; and taking aim at the monster, he pierced it through the heart, so that it fell dead on the field. After this the battle was easily won, Eistein himself being struck down whilst attempting to fly for his life.

Ragnar's sons engaged in many other wars and piratical expeditions. Their combined forces conquered the rich town of Wifelsburg, after which they marched to Luna in Etruria. They found it strongly garrisoned, and therefore sent messengers into the town to say that they came with peaceful intentions, merely to buy victuals, and that their captain, Hastings, who was sick to death, wished to be baptized and received into the Christian Church. Delighted with this news, the inhabitants immediately opened communication with the strangers, and the holy ceremony of baptism was performed over the sick man, the governor of the town standing sponsor.

A few days later an emissary was sent to inform the inhabitants that Hastings was dead, and that his dying wish had been that his corpse might be allowed a resting place in the Christian Church, to which he had bequeathed his riches, with the desire that the priest should annually say three masses for his soul. The messenger ended by declaring that if this was allowed to take place, it was his belief that the whole army, who intended, unarmed, to accompany the bier of their leader to the grave, would consent to be baptized.

The request was granted. On the day of the funeral the church was so crowded by the clergy, nobles and citizens of the town that there was hardly any room left for the Northmen.

The requiem was solemnly chanted, the blessing was spoken, and the body of the departed soldier was just about to be lowered into the grave when—the lid of the bier sprang open, the dead man rose up in his shroud, with a drawn sword in his hand, with which he at once slew all who came within his reach. The rest of the soldiers likewise drew forth their arms, which they had kept concealed beneath their garments, and massacred without mercy the unarmed people who filled the church. They then rushed out into the streets, plundering and murdering wherever they went, and setting the town on fire.

This was the strategy by which means the Northmen possessed themselves of the town of Luna.

While his sons were engaged in these warlike expeditions, King Ragnar himself was not idle. He determined on an invasion of Britain, in order to force King Ella to pay him tribute. For this purpose he had two new ships built, large enough to carry a great number of soldiers, and with these he landed on the British coast. He devastated the country in a terrible manner, and engaged in many bloody battles, but he never received any wound, for Aslog had woven him a magic garment, through which neither shot nor sword could penetrate.

One day his ships were driven by a storm into a Northumbrian bay, where they struck upon a rock and foundered. He, however, with many of his men and some arms, succeeded in gaining the shore. Here they soon encountered Ella's forces, but the brave soldier, nothing daunted, did not hesitate a moment, with his handful of followers, to commence the attack. He fought without

flinching in the hottest part of the battle, but as his brave soldiers fell around him, he was at length surrounded by the enemy, and taken prisoner. No one recognised him, and as he refused to answer any of the questions put to him, King Ella, in anger, ordered him to be thrown into a dungeon full of serpents.

At first Aslog's magic garment protected him from any hurt, but the guards, when they perceived this, deprived him of it, and he soon after succumbed to their venomous stings.

Thus died brave King Ragnar, like a hero as he was, uttering neither cry nor complaint under his slow torture, but singing in rich clear tones a dirge of the Northland.

KING HELGE AND ROLF KRAKI.

HELGE, king of Denmark, was a brave hero, and loved nothing better than daring expeditions.

He landed one day on a lonely island, at a time when hill and vale, meadow and cornfield, were clad in summer's richest garb. But he and his wild warriors were blind to nature's charms; their one aim was to secure as much plunder as they could. So they took the inhabitants prisoners, and then possessed themselves of their cattle and their goods.

Now amongst the prisoners there was a young maiden named Thora, who differed from her companions as much as the moon differs from the stars. The king was deeply moved at the sight of her wonderful beauty, and when he heard the sweet tones of her silvery voice, and learnt that she was of royal birth, he offered her his hand, his heart, and his throne. She did not refuse him, and the wedding was celebrated amidst much rejoicing. The happy bridegroom remained a week on the island, spending the days in wandering through the shady groves with his lovely bride beside him. Then he took her back with him to his home at Hledra, where they lived contentedly till the following spring.

By that time Helge was beginning to tire of the monotony of his quiet life, and was filled with a great long-

ing to resume his expeditions to foreign lands. His love for his wife had passed away; he looked on her only as a hindrance to his future plans.

Therefore when he embarked in his vessel he forbade her to remain at the palace, and commanded certain of his courtiers to take her back to the lovely island where he had first found her.

After the lapse of many years, a sudden storm one day compelled Helge to take refuge in the nearest port. On landing, he soon recognized the picturesque shores and shady groves where he had once wandered so happily with his fair bride. He made inquiries for Thora, but she had disappeared; no one knew anything about her. Could she be dead? or had she been carried away by pirates? Such were Helge's thoughts as he wandered through the woods and meadows which he knew so well. But suddenly he stopped short in his wanderings, for there before him, gazing into the clear waters of a murmuring brook, he saw her sitting, younger and more beautiful than ever.

He hastened towards her with outstretched arms, but just as he would have clasped her to his breast, he suddenly became aware that it was not his wife, but a stranger, who rose to greet him. Nevertheless, he was sure that he detected in her a strong resemblance to his dear Thora, not only in her outward appearance, but also in the silvery tones of her voice. Convinced that she had been sent by the gods to recompense him for the loss of his former queen, he addressed the maiden, who told him that her name was Yrsa, and that she came from a

distant part of Saxony. Her beauty was such that Helge loved her at first sight, and as he believed that she had been sent him by the gods, he besought her to become his bride. Knowing him to be a brave and noble hero, the maiden gladly consented to his proposals, and then for the second time Helge brought a queen to Hledra.

With his advancing years, King Helge became more quiet and thoughtful than formerly, and loved to pass his leisure hours in the company of his fair young wife and Rolf, his little son. How he rejoiced when the child smiled up into his face, and tried, when only six years old, to draw his father's battle-sword from its sheath!

One day, the king and his beloved Yrsa were sitting on a mossy bank in a pine wood, watching with infinite pleasure, the innocent gambols of their child. Helge was telling his wife how much he loved her, and assuring her that no power on earth should ever part them, when suddenly the bushes near them rustled, the boughs were parted by a white hand, and out stepped a female figure, clad in black from head to foot, and thickly veiled. As she advanced towards them, she threw back her veil, and behold—there stood Thora, aged and pale, and altered, but still Thora, Helge's rightful spouse. "Traitor!" she cried: "as easily as a lighted torch could destroy this mighty forest, so easily can one word from me set the death seal to thy happiness!"

Then Yrsa knew that this was indeed Helge's first wife who stood before them, and that she had no longer any right to stay with her beloved lord. With a piteous wail of despair, she fell fainting to the ground, while

Helge, bending over her, vowed that nought but death should ever rob him of his fair wife.

He would have clasped her in his arms, but Yrsa motioned him away, murmuring in broken accents, "Never more, Helge. We have loved each other truly, but now we must part for ever, for Thora is thy lawful spouse. May be the gods will take pity on us, and bring us together again in Valhalla, but on earth we may meet no more. Farewell!" With these words she vanished into the dark forest, and the king was left alone in his misery, for Thora, too, fearing her husband's wrath, fled from him into the wood.

Helge now determined to use all the means in his power to recover his lost Yrsa.

First he sent messengers to her, but in vain, for she would not listen to their words. Then he started with warriors to find her himself, and force her to come back with him, but when she heard that he was coming, she fled into the interior of Saxony, whither also he resolved to follow her.

In the meantime, Adils, king of Upsala, who was in want of a wife, heard of the great beauty of the Saxon princess, and knowing that she lived in daily terror of Helge's pursuit, he determined to offer her protection by making her his queen.

So when the spring came, he sent his ambassadors to Saxony to plead his suit with Yrsa, who lent a favourable ear to his proposals, and returned with the messengers to Swithiod, for there she hoped to be safe from the persecutions of Helge. But though she was surrounded

by every possible luxury at the court of Upsala, the young queen was far from happy, for her heart was still full of love for her lost husband.

When Helge heard of the union between King Adils and Yrsa, he too was filled with sorrow. Knowing, however, that his forces were not strong enough to invade Swithiod, he dismissed his army and tried to think of other means by which to regain Yrsa. Meanwhile he fell into a state of the deepest melancholy, from which nothing could rouse him except the sight of his son Rolf, who was rapidly growing from a child into a man, and was so tall and slim that he was surnamed Kraki, which means *a pole*.

But the excellence of his son could not console Helge for the loss of his wife, and as he knew Adils to be an avaricious man, he determined to offer him some of his richest treasures if he would consent to give him his beloved Yrsa once more.

Accordingly he selected the most valuable jewels from his treasury, and with these and a few brave warriors he started for Upsala.

King Adils was filled with greed at the sight of the sparkling jewels, and readily consented to Helge's proposal. Thinking, however, that it would disgrace him were it known that he sold his wife for gold, he bade Helge either fly with her secretly or carry her away by force.

The two kings having come to this agreement, Helge was admitted into the presence of the queen. When his eyes fell upon her lovely form, he stood like one en-

tranced, for though she looked older than in former days, yet she was to him what she had always been, the pearl of the north, the most beautiful and the most noble of women.

He spoke of the great love he bore her, told her of Adils' unworthiness, and implored her to come to him once more.

But rising majestically from her seat, Yrsa thus addressed him: "I will not listen to thine entreaties, for even if I were to go with thee, we could never be happy together as long as Thora lives. Our union could only disgrace us in life, and condemn us in death." Helge, though deeply moved by these words, would not give up his purpose; he attempted to seize her, and carry her away by force, but rushing on to the balcony, she cried out that if he came one step nearer she would throw herself over. He dared not approach her, and at length yielded to her entreaties that he would leave her, and torment her no longer by his presence. So with aching heart he bade her farewell, and quitted the palace.

But King Adils, bitterly disappointed at having to give up the treasures, commanded his servants to lie in wait for his guest in a dark forest, and there to rob him of his jewels as he passed by.

And so it happened that as Helge was returning home through the wood with heavy heart, he and his companions were suddenly attacked by a large band of ruffians. A desperate struggle ensued, in which Helge and his party were overpowered by numbers, and foully slain. The murderers then took possession of the treasures

which they found on the dead bodies, and carried them to King Adils, as they had been commanded.

Rolf was only fifteen years old at the time of his father's death, but he was so much beloved by the Danish people that they unanimously chose him king in his father's stead. He was a brave and noble youth, and soon became renowned as a mighty hero. All the neighbouring monarchs were subject to him, and his praise resounded through many distant lands.

After the lapse of several years, Rolf conceived a desire to visit the scene of his father's murder. He therefore started for Upsala, and on arriving at the palace was joyfully welcomed by his mother Yrsa; whilst Adils caused a great fire to be made at the entrance to the hall, as though in honour of his guests. But when Rolf and his comrades were all seated at the banquet, King Adils ordered his servants to make the fire larger and larger, until at length, when the heat was beginning to be intolerable, he and his followers quietly left the hall by a secret door. Not long had they done so when the clothes of the guests who were seated nearest the blazing mass caught fire. Then Rolf, in order to save himself and his companions from destruction, flung his shield on to the rising flames, and springing over it, called on the rest to follow his example.

In the courtyard they were met by Queen Yrsa, who told them of a place of shelter where they might conceal themselves for the time, but she advised them to depart early the next morning, since Adils was bent on their destruction. Before leaving them, she gave Rolf a silver

goblet containing all the jewels which Adils had stolen from his father Helge.

Rolf and his companions straightway betook themselves to the place of safety which the queen had pointed out, and after refreshing themselves with meat and drink, lay down to rest. A few hours later Rolf awoke, and found that the roof which sheltered them was on fire, whilst the doors were blocked from the outside with huge stones and beams. He lost no time in arousing his comrades, and by their united strength they succeeded in throwing down one of the side walls, and so escaped from an untimely and horrible death. After routing and putting to flight the armed warriors whom Adils had set around the house, Rolf and his companions mounted their steeds and commenced their journey homewards. But they soon became aware that their enemies were in pursuit, for the distant sound of horses' hoofs became clearer and clearer every moment. "It is Adils and his followers!" cried Rolf. "Strew the golden treasures in the road—that will arrest their progress." The men did as they were bidden, whilst Rolf himself emptied the contents of the silver goblet which his mother had given him.

His plan succeeded, for when the pursuers saw the treasures lying in the road, they gave up the chase, and eagerly dismounted to collect the booty. Adils, however, continued the pursuit, till just as he had almost reached the fugitives his eye fell on a costly ring lying at the side of the track. His avarice proved too strong for him to resist, and reining up his steed, he bent down to pick up the bauble on the point of his sword. At the same

moment Rolf, perceiving his advantage, turned upon his pursuer and stabbed him through the back, ere he had time to raise himself from his stooping posture.

"Live!" he cried, laughingly,—"live if thou canst with this remembrance of thy loving son!" With these words he picked up the jewel, and putting spurs to his horse, rode away with his followers, leaving the enemy far behind.

Rolf now returned to Hledra, where he was warmly welcomed by his faithful subjects. There he ruled with wisdom and gentleness. Unhappily his reign was destined to be a short one, for ere long he was slain in battle, while fighting in his country's cause. His soul was borne by the gods to the Halls of Valhalla, but the memory of the brave young hero lives still in the songs of countless minstrels, and in the hearts of a loving people.

THE BATTLE OF BRAVALLA.

In the land of Swithiod (Sweden) there ruled a king named Ingiald. He was not a good king, for he was by nature cruel and cunning. This was chiefly the fault of King Swipdager, in whose charge Ingiald had been placed when a child. Swipdager, in order to engender courage in him, had given him a wolf's heart to eat, in consequence of which his nature had become like that of a brute beast.

On the day of his father's funeral, when many of the neighbouring princes and rulers had assembled together at a grand banquet, given in memory of the late king, Ingiald swore a great oath that he would soon conquer all the surrounding provinces.

The goblet was freely circulated among the assembled guests, who presently succumbed to the potent influence of the wine, and fell asleep upon the couches. Ingiald then gave orders that the palace should be surrounded by armed men, while he himself set fire to the hall where his guests lay sleeping. The soldiers stationed without made it impossible for them to escape, so that they all perished miserably in the flames. The treacherous king then took possession of their provinces.

Ingiald had two children, a son named Olaf, and a daughter named Asa. His daughter was very beautiful,

but she, unfortunately, inherited her father's cruel, cunning nature. She wedded Gudröd, king of Skaney, who loved her so dearly that he could refuse her nothing; in consequence of which he allowed himself to be persuaded by her to go to war with his brother Halfdan.

Halfdan, thus suddenly attacked, was defeated, he himself falling on the battle-field; but Gudröd did not live long to enjoy his conquest, for he was soon after secretly murdered by a friend of Halfdan's.

Halfdan's son Iwar now arose, determined to avenge his father's death. Collecting the scattered remnants of his army, he marched against Asa's forces. As the hostile factions approached each other, Asa rode through the ranks of her soldiers, encouraging and exhorting them to fight bravely against the enemy. But her enthusiasm awakened no response; the men stood silent with bowed heads.

Presently the horns sounded for the attack; the enemy advanced; then with one accord Asa's soldiers lowered their arms, and greeted Iwar, Halfdan's son, as their king. Asa, seeing that she was deserted, fled from the field, and sought an asylum at her father's court. He too, however, was threatened with desertion, but he hoped during the winter to be able to collect a formidable army.

On one of the islands belonging to King Ingiald, he and his courtiers held a carouse, while the beautiful Asa filled the goblets with rich and sparkling wine. But on the third day of the feasting there came messengers to the Island, who spread terror among the revellers, for they reported that Iwar had made a passage through the snow

and ice to Swithiod; that peasants and soldiers alike had gone over to his side, and made common cause with him against the tyrant. The Island was already surrounded; no ship was left by which Ingiald could make his escape. Death or captivity stared him in the face, but he chose rather to die by his own hand than fall a victim to his bitter foe. He therefore watched his opportunity; when his courtiers were all asleep in the banqueting hall, he and his daughter Asa, after having made fast all the doors to prevent their escape, set fire to the palace. They then ascended the battlements, where they stood surrounded by flames, as Iwar's army approached, until the whole palace was consumed by the fire, and they and all the courtiers perished in the burning ruins.

The victorious Iwar now marched to Upsala, where he offered thank-offerings, and received the homage of the people of Swithiod. His conquests extended far and wide, for he soon succeeded in subjecting all the surrounding provinces. Denmark alone was too powerful for him, for its kings, Hrodrik and Helge, were famous for their noble deeds of prowess.

Iwar therefore, seeing that he could not overcome them in battle, determined to conquer them by cunning.

It chanced that Hrodrik loved Iwar's fair daughter Auda, and sued for her hand. Her father gladly gave his consent to the marriage, which was duly solemnized. Not long after, Iwar, whilst cruising about in his vessel, landed on the coast of Denmark. Now was his time to carry out his base plot: he persuaded Hrodrik that his brother Helge was in love with Auda, and urged him to

lose no time avenging his tarnished honour. In vain did the virtuous Auda strive to persuade her husband of her father's treachery,—Hrodrik was deaf to her entreaties, and, fully persuaded of his brother's guilt, he stabbed him with his sword during a tournament.

Auda, in terror, fled from her husband's court, and taking with her her little son Harald, sought refuge in a garrisoned castle.

In the meantime Iwar, once more landing on the Danish coast, accused Hrodrik of the murder of his brother. Attacking him with his powerful army, he easily conquered the Danish forces, Hrodrik himself falling by his sword.

Iwar now called together the men of Denmark, bidding them choose a new king. To his surprise, however, his own daughter Auda advanced into their midst; at sight of her, the Danes instantly rallied round their beloved queen, declaring themselves ready to protect their country from the invasion of the stranger. Iwar, unprepared for such a determined resistance, had no choice but to embark in his vessel, and return to his own country.

During the winter, however, he made extensive preparations for a new invasion of Denmark. Auda, hearing of this, felt that without help she would not be able to resist her father's attack; she therefore embarked with her little son and the royal treasure, and accompanied by a numerous retinue sailed for Russia, for here she hoped to find an asylum at the court of King Radbard.

The king made her welcome, surrounding her with every luxury his court could supply; but it was out of his

power to give her any aid in winning back her kingdom, of which her father Iwar had already taken possession; for though he had a large army of brave soldiers, he did not dare to send his puny fleet against the seafaring Northmen.

But ere long he learnt to love the beautiful and virtuous queen, and besought her to become his wife, to which she, after some hesitation, consented.

Iwar was much afraid when the news of this marriage reached him, for he knew his daughter's determined spirit. Resolved therefore to anticipate King Radbard, he sailed for Russia with a large army and a numerous fleet. One night during the voyage he had a strange dream, in which he saw a vision of a frightful dragon coming over the sea, whose huge wings disturbed the waters, raising great waves as he swam along. Then in the north rose a dark thunder-cloud, which advanced towards the dragon. No sooner had the monster come in contact with it, than a fearful clap of thunder broke over the land, the lightning flashed, the storm-wind howled, and the earth trembled and shook. Nothing more could be seen, only the crashes and peals of thunder could be heard as they rolled over the northern countries, echoing and re-echoing in the distance.

Iwar awoke. He lay beneath a purple tent, which had been placed for him on the deck of his beautiful vessel. The sun rose, sending his golden rays over land and sea; but the beauty of nature had no power to send peace into the troubled heart of the king. He commanded that Hörd, his foster-father, should be brought to him, to

interpret his dream. Hörd obeyed the summons, but stood on a projecting rock on the shore, refusing to come on board the king's vessel. He was a tall, imposing man, but his face was scarcely visible, for he wore a large hat, which was pulled down low over his forehead, while his shoulders were enveloped in a flowing mantle.

Iwar, after relating to him his dream, demanded an interpretation of the same. The old man replied that he thought the dream signified that King Iwar would soon wander in the pale halls of Hel. "Tell me," cried Iwar, "how am I esteemed by the gods?" "They regard thee as their bitter foe," replied Hörd; "thou art to them the dragon of the South." When the king heard these words, he was beside himself with rage. "Thou prophesiest death to me," cried he; "but thou shalt precede me to Hel!" So saying, he rushed with drawn sword towards the old man, but in doing so he fell headlong over the side of the vessel into the sea. Hörd springing after him, likewise disappeared beneath the waves, and neither was destined ever again to behold the light of day.

As soon as the news of the king's death became known to his warriors, they determined to abandon the war against King Radbard, and returned peaceably to their own country.

HARALD AND SIGURD RING.

One of King Iwar's vessels, with the flag of truce hoisted at her mast-head, was now sent to the shore, to land the chief of the army, formerly a guest of King Radbard, who was to acquaint him with what had hap-

pened. The king received the messenger and his retinue at the court with much hospitality. Auda herself filled their goblets at the banquet given in their honour, at which her son Harald was also present. When the warriors saw the young prince they were much pleased with his noble bearing, and when he requested to be allowed to accompany them to the land of his fathers, they one and all arose and greeted him as their king.

Harald took a tender farewell of his beloved mother, who blessed her son, praying that Odin might soon place him upon the throne of his forefathers. She then took from a chest two swords with golden hilts; these she gave to Harald, bidding him use them only in honourable warfare, for then they would not fail to ensure him the victory.

Soon after Harald stood upon the deck of his vessel, which, with the little fleet which accompanied him, bounded lightly over the crested waves towards Hledra, the palace of the Danish kings. But bye-and-bye they were overtaken by a terrible storm; the waves rose mountain high; the masts split; courage and hope alike forsook the hearts of the sailors, while the fear of death was depicted on every face. Harald alone was undaunted; he seized the rudder, crying, "Courage, friends! Odin is ever a protector of the brave!" Hardly had he spoken when he perceived, standing beside him, an old warrior of tall stature, with a large hat drawn low over his forehead. The stranger, in loud clear tones, rebuked the storm: in an instant the waves subsided, the wind was hushed, and all was calm and peaceful. He then took the rudder, and

under his guidance the vessel cut through the water with wonderful swiftness, while the rest of the fleet, collecting together, followed its lead.

The sailors knew well who it was that had come amongst them to save them from destruction, but they dared not so much as breathe his name. Moreover, as soon as the vessels had touched the strand, the stranger suddenly disappeared, though no one knew whither he had gone.

Harald found his country in a troubled state, for while some of his subjects were loyal to him, many were still adherents of Iwar. He therefore called the people together, and in a noble speech reminded them how long the country had flourished under the rule of his forefathers, telling them, too, how Odin had protected him and his fleet during the voyage. While he was yet speaking, a pair of eagles came flying down from the clouds, and fluttered round the head of the noble youth, who looked so bright and beautiful as he stood proudly urging his claim upon the assembled multitude that they arose, crying to a man: "Harald shall be our king! Hail to our king!" Then, lifting him upon the royal shield, they bore him in triumph to the palace, and placed him upon the throne of his forefathers.

Ere long great numbers of brave warriors gathered round the banner of the young king, with whose help he soon succeeded in conquering the whole of Gothland, which still adhered to Iwar.

On one occasion, when he was about to do battle with the Goths, he offered up sacrifices to Odin, beseeching the

god to grant him the victory. As he did so he saw approaching him the same old man with the big hat drawn over his forehead and the flowing mantle, who had befriended him on his voyage to Denmark, by saving his fleet from destruction during the storm. The stranger carried a blood-red cloak, which he threw around King Harald's shoulders, while on his head he placed a new helmet bidding him carry no shield in battle, for the cloak and the helmet would protect him from injury. Having thus spoken, he disappeared from view.

When the horns sounded for the attack, Harald rushed at his adversaries, scattering them like chaff, while he himself was safe from hurt, for neither sword nor spear could penetrate his wonderful mantle.

Thus the victory was easily gained, and from that time forth the blood-red cloak protected him in all his campaigns.

Harald's court at Hledra was the most magnificent of any king of his time; it was famous also as being the home of many great and noble men.

One day a stranger, who was no other than the king's half-brother, Randwer, the son of Radbard and Auda, arrived at the palace. Harald received his brother with open arms, but Randwer had sad news to tell, for both his father and mother were dead, and his elder brother, now the king, had banished him from the country out of jealousy.

So Randwer remained at Harald's court, fighting his battles with him, and showing himself to be a good and brave man. Harald therefore made him king of Upsala

and West Gothland, which countries he was to hold as his vassal.

Randwer, however, did not live long to enjoy his good fortune; he died in the arms of his brave young son, Sigurd Ring, who had accompanied him on an expedition against Britain.

Sigurd Ring was now with one accord chosen king in his father's stead. For full fifty years the peace of the country was unbroken, until at length the coast of Harald's domains was invaded and overrun by a swarm of pirates. Harald, in spite of age and infirmity, marched against them, riding at the head of his soldiers, wrapped in Odin's blood-red mantle, and holding in either hand a golden-hilted sword, the parting gift of his mother, the fair Auda.

The battle raged long and fiercely, but at length the pirates were forced to fly over the border into King Sigurd Ring's domain.

As Harald stood in his chariot, watching their flight, a suspicion suddenly flashed upon him that these pirates had invaded his territory with the consent of his brother-king. As he thus pondered, Bruni, one of the bravest of his warriors, approached him, having just returned from the pursuit of the enemy. He told the king that he had been stopped on the way by a detachment of soldiers under the banner of Upsala, and that there was therefore no doubt but that the pirates had invaded the country under the protection, or perhaps at the instigation, of King Sigurd Ring. These words aroused the just wrath of the aged monarch.

--Go, tell my treacherous kinsman," he cried, "that I command him, as my vassal, instantly to appear before the tribunal of this country, to answer for his base conduct."

"Thy commands shall be obeyed," replied Bruni, who at once departed to fulfil the behest of his sovereign.

He set out for Upsala, accompanied by a brilliant retinue. When he arrived at the palace he found much feasting and revelry going on, while in the midst of the courtiers sat King Sigurd Ring himself. To him Bruni delivered his message, whereupon the king replied in astonishment,—

"I deny the right of King Harald to call me his vassal; it is true that it has been my wont to send yearly gifts to Hledra, but never either taxes or tribute-money. Go, tell thy master that the sword alone shall be judge between him and me in this matter."

"Well spoken, O king!" cried Bruni, "Odin will rejoice to hear thy noble answer!" Sigurd Ring looked at the messenger in unfeigned astonishment, but as he did so he recognized in the stranger one of the brave warriors who had often fought in battle at his father's side. He therefore bade him be seated beside him, feasted him at his board, and loaded him with rich gifts at his departure.

Bruni delivered Sigurd Ring's message to Harald, who vowed that he would soon find means to punish the presumption of the Swedish king.

After much communication it was at length arranged that in seven years' time the two sovereigns should join in battle, thus to decide to which of them belonged the supremacy.

THE BATTLE OF BRAVALLA.

Seven years soon elapsed, during which time both Harald and Sigurd Ring, collecting their forces, made preparations for the great battle which was finally to decide the sovereignty of one country over the other.

At the appointed time the two mighty fleets sailed for the Bay of Brawik, for the battle was to be fought close by, on the Common of Bravalla, which separated Harald's kingdom of Denmark from Sweden, the territory of King Sigurd Ring.

Early in the morning, when the rising sun was sending forth his golden rays over land and sea, the two great hostile armies drew themselves up for battle. Then the noble but aged Harald, mounting his war-chariot, gave the signal for the attack. Instantly the horns were sounded, the battle-cry of the multitudes rose on the wind, echoing over hill and vale; arrows and javelins whistled through the air; spears crashed against shields and breast-plates.

At the head of the Swedish soldiers fought the brave Ragwald, who forced his way into the ranks of the enemy, felling the Danish soldiers to the ground with his mighty sword. Then Ubbi the Dane, seeing the distress of his countrymen, hastened to their aid; he rushed upon the Swedish hero, and the two crossed swords together. The fight was desperate, but at length Ragwald fell, pierced to the heart by Ubbi's hand. The victor then pressed forward, urging his soldiers to follow. They broke through the ranks of the enemy, carrying all

before them as they went, for the Swedish soldiers dared not await the onset of the mighty hero.

When King Sigurd Ring perceived the triumph of the Danes, he cried out,—

"Is there no one amongst my warriors who will do battle with this destroyer?"

"I will!" cried one of the bravest of his soldiers, and pressing through the crowd, he rushed with drawn sword upon the advancing Ubbi. The tumult became so great, however, that they were soon separated. Ubbi, whose shield had been destroyed, seized his mighty sword with both hands, and made for himself a passage through the ranks of the enemy by felling to the ground all who stood in his way, while his brave soldiers protected him from attack in the rear.

Then the Swedes, seeing that this mighty man was not to be overcome by the sword, rained down arrows upon him from the distance. Numbers of brave warriors fell, while fighting fiercely at his side, until at length one arrow hit its mark, piercing the heart of the hero whom no sword could conquer. With Ubbi sank Denmark's glory and might.

The battle continued to rage fiercely, but from the moment that the brave Ubbi fell, fortune seemed to turn against the Danes. Starkad, one of Sigurd Ring's warriors, followed by many of his bravest soldiers, broke through the Danish ranks, spreading terror and confusion as they advanced.

A cry of woe was echoed along the lines as the brave Danish soldiers saw that their cause was lost. Harald,

however, rallying all his energies for a last effort to save the honour of his country, drove his chariot into the midst of the Swedish army, whilst, with a mighty sword in either hand, he struck down his enemies as he advanced, his followers fighting bravely round him. He was soon prevented from advancing, however, by the corpses of the slain, which covered the battle-field. The soldiers of both sides fought the more desperately round the royal chariot, till at length a mighty blow from a club aimed at the king instantly felled him to the ground. The fighting continued, however, over the corpse of the slain monarch, until Sigurd Ring, wishing now to put an end to the bloody battle, ordered a truce to be proclaimed.

The horns were sounded on both sides for a cessation and the shattered remnants of the armies retired to their respective camps.

The defeat of the Danes was unquestionable, for the number of their slain and wounded was just double that of the Swedes.

On the evening of the same day the victorious king, accompanied by a retinue of soldiers, appeared in the Danish camp. Summoning the leaders of their army, he explained to them his rights to the sovereignty of Denmark and Gothland. The Danes, knowing that they had no choice but to submit to the will of the conqueror, consented, though unwillingly, to acknowledge him as their king.

The following day Sigurd Ring commanded the body of the slain monarch to be placed upon his war-chariot, and drawn by his own richly-caparisoned charger to the

funeral pile, on which had been placed Harald's stately vessel, which was to receive his corpse.

The flames rose high and wrapt themselves about the vessel. Then King Sigurd Ring, mounting his steed, cried: "Let the great monarch who has died the death of a noble hero depart from this world to the halls of Valhalla laden with rich gifts, and covered with kingly honour."

With these words he rode round the funeral pile, accompanied by many princes and warriors, while each and all of them, following the king's example, cast rich gifts of jewels and wrought gold on the burning mass.

By the king's command the ashes of the departed hero were placed in a golden urn, which was taken to Hledra, and there buried, a costly monument being raised over the spot.

Sigurd Ring then ordered a grand banquet to be prepared in Harald's memory, to which he invited the princes and nobles of Denmark and Gothland, and whilst his guests feasted, he sat at the board, praising the noble deeds of the departed king.

By this wise policy he won the hearts of the Danish people, who now willingly acknowledged him as their ruler.

Thus did the battle of Bravalla end the struggle for supremacy between King Sigurd Ring of Sweden and King Harald of Denmark. Sigurd Ring's rule was wise and mild. He reigned long and happily as king of Denmark and Sweden, beloved by his subjects of both countries, and died at length full of years and honour, but by foul assassination, when asleep on board his ship, the Dragon.

WAYLAND SMITH.

"Tick-tack-tock! tick-tack-tay!
Hey, merry comrades, hammer away!
When the iron's hot, and the sparks do fly,
Something comes of it by-and-by.
Tick-tack-tock! tick-tack-tay!
So comes the end of a busy day."

So SANG three sturdy lads, as they forged in their smithy the blade of a sword. "Ay," said the youngest of them, " 'tis time to leave off. The hammer has done its work, to-morrow we shall temper Ring-cleaver, give him an edge with elf-powder, fit him with a sheath and a gold hilt, then print the magic mark, and there's a weapon for you! I tell you, brothers, the sword that Freyr gave Skirnir was no keener, nor shone brightlier, than our handiwork." His brothers answered: "You see, Wayland, you learnt the trick of it among the same black elves (dwarfs) that forged the sword of Freyr, so the work ought to praise the workman. Now let us throw off our leather aprons, and wash away the sweat and soot in the cool sea-wave. Maybe grandmother Wave-hild, the merwoman, will shew us some treasure to pick up."

So saying, the three brothers went down to the shore and bathed, and came up sleek and fair, looking more like light-elves. As they stood enjoying the cool of even-

ing, they heard a flapping in the air, and looking up saw a strange sight. Three maidens, with swan-jackets fastened round their waists, were flying over their heads. Presently they fluttered down to the ground, laid aside their winged robes, and bathed in the luke-warm flood. Then they sat down on the grass, and with golden spindles spun the fate of battles: they were valkyries, daughters of kings, and plied the ôrlage (event of war). The young men understood this at a glance, and creeping up softly, carried off the feather garments, and hid them in a safe place. The maidens, looking round for their jackets, heard the brothers hail them in friendly fashion, and invite them to their dwelling. In vain they looked about for any other shelter: in that bleak valley, named the Wolf's Dale, there was no sign of habitation far or near. Indignant as they felt, they had no choice but to accept the offer. Nor did they repent it: at the cheerful supper the brothers struck up melodious songs, with voice answering voice; they told of the marvels they had seen in Finmark, the land of magic, and of the gold that rolls in the waves of the Rhine; they showed them the Rhine-gold they had themselves picked up, and the rings and jewels they had wrought out of it by the cunning of their craft. The young men's speech and manners were so winning that the maidens soon consented to be their brides. Egil, the second brother, won the bold Ælrûn, and Slagfether (flap-wing) the stately Swan-white, while Wayland led the lovely Allwhite, the youngest, into his abode.

Seven winters did these wedded couples live together

in peace and joy. The "shield-maidens" took delight in the men's cunning handiwork, in the helmets, hauberks, shields, swords, and arrows that ever and anon came close-knit and glittering out of the sooty work-shop. They adorned themselves with rings and costly jewellery that their husbands gave them for presents. They prepared the meal to set before them when they returned from hunting. Especially did Allwhite love her ingenious and inventive Wayland; and once, when he stept before her in bright armour, with the last sword he had made hanging at his hip, and when he pulled the huge helmet-cleaver out of its sheath, and made it flash like lightning in his hand, while he split a bar of iron with it,—then she fancied she beheld such a hero as she had seen on the bloody battle-field when she hovered above the armies, bringing victory or death. She clasped her husband in her loving arms, and gave him a gold ring, telling him it was one that bred love in gods and men.

But the war-cry never rang in this lonely valley: nothing but the howl of the wolf broke the stillness of night, and now and then a stranger would drop in, to get him a sword or a suit of armour straight from the smithy. Life glided on, still and monotonous. And in the eighth year a longing seized the women to ply their old trade of ôrlaw, to witness the bold deeds of heroes, to flit over land and sea on cloud-steeds or in swan-weeds, and at Odin's bidding to sway the wild tumult of war. They grew restless, they chafed and pined for their feathered garments; yet they durst not let their husbands know what was gnawing at their hearts and spoiling all

their happiness. For a whole year they bore their grief silently locked up in their bosoms; at length in the ninth year they found a hidden closet, and in it their swan-jackets. They shouted for joy, hurried down to the shore, and with loud-flapping pinions soared away into the blue height.

In the evening the wayworn huntsmen returned from the chase. They came lugging their prey, a she-bear they had killed; but they found the house deserted, and the closet that concealed the valkyr-vestments broken open and empty. They knew what had happened, and without stopping to rest, Egil and Slagfether set out in search of their beloved brides. Wayland, stunned with grief, stayed behind: he still hoped that Allwhite the loving would come back to him. He sat at home, forging gold rings exactly like the one his wife had given him as a pledge of her love. Seven hundred such he tied together with a rope of tree-rind, and among them the true one, which no thievish hand, nor any one but he and his wife, could have picek out. One evening he came home late from hunting, and on counting the rings, he found one missing, the very one he prized above all things. "She has been in the house, she has picked it out, she will come back to me yet," he muttered to himself, and dreamt the delicious dream of a joyful reunion. His thoughts became confused, and he fell into a deep sleep. Anything but gently was he awakened; when he tried to get up, he felt cords drawn tightly about his hands and feet. Torches glimmered, arms clashed, and before the astonished smith there stood a savage-looking man. He knew him well—

it was the Niduth the Drost (chief) of the Niars; and he guessed that he had fallen upon him because he had heard of his forlorn condition. "Black-elves' apprentice!" growled the Drost, "out of my soil you got this gold, that you make into rings to bribe my soldiers with." At first Wayland held his tongue, then he answered: "Traitor, not in your bleak mountains does the pure metal grow; it is the Rhine-gold that glitters in my chambers. Who gave you the right to cast a freeman into bonds?" All the answer the Drost made was to bid the cords be drawn tighter, the man and his treasures be shipped on board, and the barge swiftly steered to the land of the Niars. The rising moon was mirrored in the glassy sea, she shone on the shields of the mailed warriors that stood round the captive smith. Before she set, the vessel had reached the coast where Niar-burgh reared its frowning battlement. "How grimly the Black-elf glares at us! his eyes are wheels of fire, like the eyes of a dragon!" So muttered the warriors to each other, as they dragged the prisoner to a narrow dungeon. The Drost seemed to harbour the like thoughts. He girded himself with Wayland's sword of victory, gave the ring of love to his daughter Badhild, and a sparkling brooch to his princely spouse; then said he would restore the rest to the prisoner, take him into his service, and win him by kindness. "What!" said his more suspicious princess, "are you turning dotard before your time? have not you seen the deadly flashes the poison-snake darts out of his eyes? He will never forget to revenge, he will destroy us all when he finds himself free. Why not cut

the sinews of the Elf-king's thighs, and set him on yon Holm of Seastead, so that crippled he may still work for us and make us weapons and jewels?" The Drost thought this a cunning device, and gave orders to have it carried out.

There sat the unhappy man in the Holm of Seastead, suffering his pain, brooding on revenge, and often thinking of that happy time in the wilds of Wolfsdale. No one cared to set foot on the Holm, save Niduth the Drost, who came to set him tasks, when once the wounds were healed, and the man he had wronged was rendered harmless by laming. Harmless he seemed to those who did not know his skill and his elfish nature. He first made himself a winged jacket on the pattern of the valkyrian garments, and then he could have flown away at once; but he thought of revenge even more than of freedom. With unflagging industry he made for his master coats of mail, javelins, swords, trinkets of gold, and in every way showed himself a willing servant. One day the Drost brought the very sword he had taken from him, to have the pommel and ring more richly mounted with jewels. In three nights, thought the smith, his lord's commands would be accomplished. Now glowed the forge, now rang the hammer-stroke both day and night; for Wayland was bent on making not only the promised jewel-work, but a second sword, not distinguishable from the first, but without its tempering, without its magic mark ensuring victory. And this sham sword he gave the Drost, who received it with a smile of satisfaction.

Two pretty boys, the sons of Niduth, were once pad-

dling about in their light canoe, and came past Seastead. There stood the sooty Elf-workman, leaning on his crutches. His eyes shot no fiendish fire like those of the lindworm; he beckoned kindly to the boys, he shewed them red rings and sparkling stones set in gold. "Come over here, my lads, I'll show you much finer things in my big coffer, and you shall pick out what pleases you best, to take with you." The boys gladly ran their boat ashore, and skipped unsuspiciously about the lame man, as he hobbled to the smithy. He showed them the mighty coffer, bade them open it, and helped them to lift the heavy iron lid. How eagerly they peeped in! what a blaze of gold and silver jewels, cups, drinking-horns, glittering rings, head-ties with snaky coils! "I'll have that sparkling brooch!" "And I that little snake with twinkling eyes!" cried the children, dipping their heads deeper into the chest. In a moment, down slammed the sharp-edged lid, their heads rolled in among the jewels, and their bodies, lay quivering on the floor. The man of iron laughed a grim laugh, for revenge was sweet; then he mopped up the trickling blood from the pavement. With a sharp knife he cut up the bodies, hiding the hands and feet under the cooling-trough, and burying the rest in the smithy. He never slept that night, he wanted first to finish the work. He reached the children's heads out of the coffer, and separated the skulls, the eyes and the teeth. Of the first he fashioned two elegant drinking-bowls for Niduth; the eyes he hardened into precious stones for his ill-natured wife; and the white teeth, set in gold, he sent as a brooch to Badhild.

The Drost of Niars could not relish the ale they set before him in those dainty goblets; even the wine of the south gave him little pleasure, for oh! he missed his bonny boys. His wife also fretted about them, for they had sought their two sons in vain. Badhild alone cared little for her brothers; but she took great delight in her new trinket with white pearls. Unluckily, as she was putting it on, the ring of love fell off her arm, and broke. She wept much, fearing her father's anger when he should come to know of the misfortune. In her distress she thought of the skillful smith, who had shown himself so friendly; she hoped he might help her out, and when evening came she went over to the Holm. Wayland was at once ready to repair the mischief, and declared that her father and mother should find the armlet prettier than before. "Sit thee down on the settle, child, and taste this cup of fine mead, whilst I get forward with the work." Badhild obeyed the civil speech; she tasted the mead, it was delicious: Heidrûn never yielded better drink to delight the gods withal. She sipped and sipped again, till she fancied everything around her was changed. The sooty workshop seemed her bridal chamber, the Elf-workman a godlike hero, handing her the wedding-ring; and she yielded to his embrace. The drunken dream lasted an hour and more; then all grew dark about her, an unspeakable horror took hold of her, and continued after she had wakened from the trance. Three bright spots glowed through the gloom: the forge, and the eyes of the Elf, who had squatted down on the middle of the floor. He was now in truth the poison-worm her mother had

once called him; he shot fiery glances at her, and croaked out hoarsely:

> "Now get thee home, sweetheart, and think of me,
> Or stay the night, and I'll make love to thee.'

He rose up tall as a giant, he stretched out his arms towards her; fright at the grisly spectre sent her flying to the boat, and she rowed back to her father's castle.

"The revenge is accomplished," muttered Wayland; "now for the Drost, and then away!" He girded his sword about him, put his winged garment on, and rose in the air on the pinions he had cunningly contrived. He alighted on a turret of the palace. He called, and his voice rang like Heimdal's Giallarhorn: "Awake, Niduth, come forth and hear good tidings." The lord in great alarm stept out of his gate, and saw his prisoner perched on the lofty turret. "Hearken, Niduth Drost of Niars!" cried the smith. "Thy children's bodies thou wilt find in my dwelling; out of their skulls thou sippest the wine of the south; their eyes thy lady wears as precious stones, their pearly teeth adorn thy daughter's breastpin. Badhild's child, that shall be born, is my offspring, and shall one day receive this sword, the sword of victory, that I have gotten back from thee. Odin shall one day bestow it on Sigmund, and after him shall his offspring, the beaming Sigurd, wear it and wield it and slay therewith the dragon Fafnir. But now I go to Light-elf Land, to meet Allwhite my beloved bride, and live with her till Ragnarök set in and the gods go down." So saying, Wayland soared away toward the rising day leaving Niduth sorrowing, for his spirit was crushed within him.

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